Nahum Tate's Adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*: Political, Social, and Aesthetic Considerations

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Abstract

Because of its vivid and intense portrayal of human suffering and life experience, modern audiences or readers often use words such as 'timeless' and 'universal' to praise Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Yet for almost a century and a half Shakespeare's *Lear* was not performed on the English stage. Instead, a radical adaptation of *Lear* by Nahum Tate, a Restoration dramatist, was the only version performed from 1681 until 1838, the year when Macready fully restored Shakespeare's text.

Traditionally, in analyzing the enduring stage success of Tate's version, most critics have argued that his happy ending was the determining factor. It has been assumed that Tate wrote a happy ending in order to suit the aesthetic taste in drama at that time, and that the survival of Cordelia demonstrates the neoclassical principle of poetic justice (where virtue is rewarded and vice is punished). Thus, according to a traditional analysis, the supposed didactic function of the play was fulfilled, and audiences satisfied. Recent critics, however, have suggested that the happy ending which restores

Lear to his throne was based on Tate's intention to create a literary affirmation of the prosperity and stability of the reign of Charles II.

Through a close study of the text of Tate's *Lear* and its relevant historical and cultural context, this thesis concludes that these explanations of the happy ending are not alternative, but are both indispensable: while Tate made his artistic purpose explicit in changing the play to suit the changed aesthetic taste of his time, there was also an unstated political subtext concerned with the monarch's role in maintaining political and social order; and this aspect held considerable appeal to audiences. The restoration of Lear to his throne is clearly related to the stability of the monarchy since the restoration of Charles II, and the original ending would have been politically unacceptable for a considerable time. The appeal of Tate's neoclassical reworking of *Lear*, however, ensured his play's continuing success until the nineteenth century.

Introduction

In seventeenth century England there was a clear link between the fortune of the Stuart kings and the state of the theatre. Gary Taylor argues that 'The English monarchy and the English theatre fell together. And when they rose again, they rose together.'[1] Here, Taylor refers to the closing down of theatres during the Civil War and the subsequent restoration of English drama by Charles II after his restoration to the throne; and his comments give a vivid description of the close bond between the Stuarts and the theatre.

However, after 1660, theatre was not the same as it had been before the Civil War. One important change was that the Restoration theatre was patronized by Charles II and his court, and was used to celebrate the Divine Right of Kings. Charles II relished drama personally, not only because he was the Merry Monarch and very fond of theatre, but also because he recognized the value of theatre for propaganda. Like other royalists, most playwrights of the Restoration defended the

traditional power structure in an attempt to rehabilitate themselves and their culture, as well as to gain or to enhance their political credibility.

The Restoration also brought a change in the aesthetic standards applied to drama. With the return of Charles II and his court from France, the English adopted seventeenth century French dramatic conventions and critical precepts (which had been borrowed by the French from sixteenth century Italy). Based on an amalgam of Aristotle's and Horace's conceptions of drama, French neoclassical dramatic principles demanded a return to the classical style of aesthetic order and perfection by emphasizing critical concepts such as the three unity rules, decorum and propriety. The introduced French critical precepts 'determined the neoclassical attitudes to Shakespeare for several generations.'[2]

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[1] Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History From the Restoration to the Present* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), p. 9.

[2] Brian Vickers, (ed.) 'Introduction' to *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), Volume 1, p. 4.

The wish to meet these aesthetic standards resulted in a vogue for adapting Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare's non-conformity to the classical rules and his violation of decorum were regarded as weaknesses; his tragedies were regarded as faulty because of the absence of poetic justice. Moreover, Restoration dramatists believed that their own language was refined in comparison with the 'rough', 'unpolish't' and 'Old fashion'd wit' of Elizabethans.'[3] Thus many of Shakespeare's plays, such as *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet, King Lear* and *Troilus and Cressida* were adapted.

In line with the general critical view of the time, Nahum Tate called Shakespeare's *Lear* 'a Heap of Jewels, unstrung, and unpolish'd; ...dazzling in their Disorder.'[4] Aiming to meet the aesthetic taste of his age, Tate determined to string and polish those jewels. He cut, rewrote or rearranged a good deal of Shakespeare's blank verse. He also invented a love story between Edgar and Cordelia, omitted two

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[3] Ibid., p. 5.

[4] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History*' ed. by James Black, (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1976), p.1.

characters (the Fool and France), and gave Cordelia a waiting woman named Arante. Most importantly, he altered the outcome, providing a happy ending in which both Lear and Cordelia remain alive.

Tate's happy ending was endorsed by most eighteenth century critics. In 1710, Charles Gildon commented: 'the King and Cordelia ought by no means to have dy'd, and therefore Mr. Tate has very justly altered that particular, which must disgust the reader and audience to have virtue and piety meet so unjust a reward.'[5] Lewis Theobald asserted in 1715 that Cordelia and Lear 'ought to have survived, as Mr. Tate has made them in his alteration....Virtue ought to be rewarded, as well as vice punished, but in their deaths this moral is broke through.'[6] In the middle of the eighteenth century, Dr. Johnson, also preferring Tate's ending to that of Shakespeare's *Lear*, made it clear that it was the death of Cordelia in Shakespeare's

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[5] Charles Gildon, Rowe's edition of Shakespeare (1710) in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Volume II, ed. Brian Vickers, p. 258.

[6] Lewis Theobald, *The Censor*, no. 10 (2 May 1715) in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Volume II, p. 306.

version which he considered to be wrong, since it failed to illustrate poetic justice. He went on to state that 'Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity.'[7]

In 1711, in *The Spectator* (No. 40), Addison stood alone in his defence of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and opposition to the neoclassicists' enforcement of poetic justice in tragedy. He stressed that poetic justice 'has no Foundation in Nature, in Reason, or in the Practice of the Ancients.'[8] Although this argument had little influence at the time, due to the dominance of neoclassicism, it shows Addison's wider understanding of the aesthetic values of tragedy, and thus underlines the validity of his critical opinion. In comparison, the Restoration critics' ruthless criticism of Shakespeare's tragedies as lacking in moral instruction, Tate's insertion of a happy ending to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and Johnson's unsympathetic judgement on

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[7] *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Raleigh (Oxford, 1908), pp. 161-162.

[8] Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 40 (1711) in *Addison and Steele: Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator* (Second Edition), ed. Robert J. Allen (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 155.

the original version of *Lear* show the narrowness of neoclassical criteria.

In the first part of Chapter One, Renaissance concepts of tragedy are examined together with the historical and cultural contexts of this era. Although Shakespeare's *Lear* could not be written in accordance with poetic justice (as the concept was not required in Renaissance tragedy), it was far from lacking in moral instruction. The tragic ending of the play was accepted by the Renaissance audience as it reflected the dramatic conventions of Shakespeare's time.

The second part of Chapter One explores the Restoration's new expectations of tragedy, according to which moral instruction was valued as paramount, and it was believed the only effective way to fulfill this didactic aim was to demonstrate poetic justice by rewarding virtue and punishing vice. By keeping Cordelia alive, Tate's *Lear* fulfilled this neoclassical requirement.

Subsequently, this thesis shows that the desire to meet neoclassical precepts of tragedy was not the only reason for Tate to adapt Shakespeare's *Lear*. Like most drama of the 1680s, Tate's adaptation of *Lear* was politically motivated. At the beginning of Chapter Two

the political climate of the Restoration is discussed: between the years 1678 and 1682, England was in a state of turmoil. With the memory of Civil War still fresh, the Popish Plot - a supposed Catholic conspiracy to assassinate Charles II in order to enthrone his Catholic brother James -spurred the Exclusion Crisis. The increasing struggles of Charles II with Parliament over the Exclusion Act[9] led people to fear that the bloodshed in the 1640s and 1650s would be repeated.

During the years of monarchical crisis, most of the playwrights, including Dryden, Otway, Edward Ravenscroft, Crowne, and Tate, sided with the Tories to support the reign of Charles II, and produced a number of political plays. They attempted to use literature to raise the level of people's political consciousness and to promote peace and stability. The central themes of these political plays were directed either against the Whigs or against Popery, and often commented on the Popish Plot or on the Exclusion Crisis, which concerned the issue of succession. The evil of faction was emphasized, and the hereditary rights of the monarchy reinforced.

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[9] The Whigs' plan of excluding James, Duke of York, from the succession.

Crowne's *Misery of Civil War* (1680), for example, condemns the results of religious faction, showing the 'scurvy Joys . . . Fools take in pelting out each others Brains' (Prologue). Edward Ravenscroft's version of *Titus Andronicus* exploits the hysteria generated by the Popish Plot. Dryden's *The Spanish Fryar* (1680) is designed to 'let the bold Conspirator beware, / For Heaven makes Princes its peculiar Care.'[10] Although Tate does not make his political motive clear in the preface of *Lear*, his emphasis on loyalty and total submission to monarchical rule makes it evident that his *Lear* was part of the Tory propaganda campaign.

Chapter Two demonstrates the significance of the political aspect of the happy ending - the 'blest restoration of Lear.'[11] During the monarchical crisis in the 1680s, when a king's rise or fall on stage was taken seriously, the death of Lear in Shakespeare's tragedy could not be tolerated. Tate rearranges Lear's fate according to a conventional Restoration interpretation of the monarchy: the Divine Right of

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[10] Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 343.

Kings. Moreover, in order to further emphasize Monarchy's absolute authority and to avoid the incipient disorder the play might cause, Tate omits the Fool, the mocking conscience of the king in Shakespeare's version of *Lear*.

While Chapter One and Chapter Two make the significance of the happy ending clear - that it not only meets the neoclassical demand for poetic justice, but is also politically motivated in supporting the rule of Charles II - Chapter Three moves on to explore Tate's invention of the love plot. Traditionally, Tate's insertion of the love story was seen in terms of a desire to satisfy the Restoration taste for a love interest in drama. Additionally, however, by exhibiting the moral responsibility shared between Cordelia and Edgar, and their devotion to the father-king, the love story is designed to set a moral example for what was regarded as the morally corrupted society by the people of his age. This alteration also combines politics with the contemporary notion of 'piety.'

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[11] Tate, *The History of King Lear*, V. vi. 118.

Chapter Four examines Tate's alteration of Shakespeare's language, another important factor in transforming Shakespeare's *Lear* into a typical Restoration drama. Like his happy ending and the love story, Tate's changing of Shakespeare's language is double-edged. On the one hand, Tate removes what was regarded as figurative language of Shakespeare by critics of his age in order to achieve neoclassical aesthetic precision and simplicity, and on the other hand, his reworking of Shakespeare's language is evidently politically motivated.

The thesis concludes that although Tate makes his aesthetic intention clear and leaves his political motive unstated, it is evident that Tate's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Lear* was designed not only to meet the changed aesthetic standards of the Restoration, but also to support his own political agenda. Neither of these two aspects should be denied or underestimated as factors in the enduring stage success of Tate's version of *Lear*.

Chapter One

Renaissance and Restoration Expectations of Tragedy

Restoration critics insisted that teaching morality should be considered the most important function of tragedy, and regarded using the didactic principle of poetic justice as the most effective way to accomplish this aim. In accordance with this theory, they censured Shakespeare's tragedies as a violation of poetic justice. Rymer, in particular, attacked *Othello* because Desdemona is killed despite being virtuous and innocent. Moreover, Dryden made it clear that his main purpose in adapting Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* was to meet the neoclassical demand for poetic justice. According to Dryden, in Shakespeare's play, 'Cressida is false, and is not punish'd'; he therefore felt a responsibility to undertake to 'remove that heap of Rubbish, under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly bury'd.'[12]

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[12] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1974), Volume 1 (1623-1692), p. 250.

King Lear is another obvious example of a play by Shakespeare being regarded as lacking poetic justice according to the standards of Restoration critics, for the death of Cordelia shows no impending divine judgment. With her filial devotion and honesty, love and charity, Cordelia is supremely virtuous. However, instead of being rewarded, she is killed; accordingly the play was considered to contribute nothing of moral utility. As a firm believer in the didactic function of tragedy, Nahum Tate, in 1681, altered the tragic outcome of Shakespeare's *Lear* to a happy ending. Through his solution of a last minute rescue, the lives of Cordelia and Lear are saved. Thus Tate's version demonstrates the principle of poetic justice and fulfills the supposed didactic function of the play.

Although Tate's alteration of the outcome of Shakespeare's *Lear* met his age's requirement of poetic justice, it is evident that, like the majority of the critics of his time, he judged Shakespeare's *King Lear* entirely on the ground of the aesthetic standards of his own age, without considering the historical context and tragic conventions of the Renaissance.

Renaissance Expectations of Tragedy

Shakespeare's *King Lear* was written in the Renaissance era, and it was comfortably accepted by the audiences of the time. In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the tragic ending, it is essential to examine the play in the context of the historical background and dramatic practice of the Renaissance age.

Hunter rightly argues that Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1594) shows no intention of 'let[ting] go of morality which has sustained him and his culture throughout preceding time.'[13] It can easily be seen that from the outset, there is in *Lear* a pattern of contrast between good and evil, and this can be considered as a Shakespearean didactic pattern. The characters are divided according to whether they stand on the side of truth or on the side of falsehood. On the one hand, Shakespeare exposes the wickedness, hypocrisy, deception and cruelty of the evil characters, such as Regan and Goneril, Edmund and Cornwall; on the other hand, he presents the beauty, honesty,

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[13] G. K. Hunter, 'Shakespeare and the traditions of tragedy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 133.

loyalty, fortitude and humanity of characters such as Cordelia, Kent, Gloucester, Edgar, the Fool, and the servant of Cornwall. Morality is expressed through this contrast between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Moreover, in Shakespeare's play, the evil daughters are destroyed by their wickedness and self-interest. Edmund, the 'natural man' who believes only in his own will, dies by Edgar's revenging sword. As he repents, Edmund is constrained to admit that there is a moral order in the universe.

Shakespeare's *Lear* portrays a world controlled by greed and irrationality, which seems to be realistic to the twentieth century audience's view of life, yet the play also expresses love and loyalty. As Kiefer observes: 'Destruction in *King Lear*, it may be argued, is balanced by regeneration: in society, love may atone for hatred, loyalty for treachery.'[14] Cordelia is 'a character whose benevolence may be termed restorative.'[15] Some critics argue that Cordelia is a Christ symbol who must die to make possible her father's redemption;

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[14]Frederick Kiefer, *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* (Huntington: The Huntington Library, 1983) p. 301.

it is because of her very virtues 'that Cordelia is chosen to be a victim of the ruthless destiny that broods over the tragic scene.'[16] Her love and devotion to her father 'compensate to some extent for the horrors perpetrated by her sisters.'[17] This point is revealed through the Gentleman's comment to Lear: 'Thou hast one daughter / Who redeems nature from the general curse / Which twain have brought her to' (*Lear* IV. vi. 205-7).

Shakespeare avoids overt moralising; when his sources offer a clear moral lesson he is likely to convert the lesson into something subtle. By looking at some of his other tragedies in relation to their sources, one can see that Shakespeare does not intend to teach morality explicitly. *Romeo and Juliet* is a good example. Here, Shakespeare took over a story with a clear moral bias and seems partly to affirm and partly to deny the moral he inherited. Arthur Brook's *Romeus and*

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[15] Ibid., p. 301.

[16]James Black, 'Introduction' to Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1976), p. lviii.

[17] Kiefer, p. 301.

Juliet (1562) condemns the lovers; it is a poem which is clearly moralistic. Shakespeare never denies that the lovers are rash and careless. Yet the rashness of his lovers is given spontaneity and charm. The reader is told neither that their love is worthwhile, nor that it is a tragic error. The power of the play depends on such contradictory elements being simultaneously presented. If, as Bradley says, 'Tragedy would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery',[18] then Shakespeare's dramatic art in general can be seen as a mystery.

Shakespeare's handling of the source play for *King Lear* reveals a similar pattern to that shown by *Romeo and Juliet. The Chronicle History of King Leir* (c. 1590), which was highly valued as 'the old honest play'[19] by Tate, and praised by Johnson for its moral worth,[20] is one of his two main sources. *Leir* contains explicit Christian morality and the message of Christian piety prevails throughout. The 'play

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[18] A. C. Bradley, quoted in *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. C. Watts. Twayne's New Critical Instroductions to Shakespeare (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1991), p. 53.

[19] Tate, 'The Prologue to *The History*', line 4, p. 5.

[20] *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Raleigh (Oxford, 1908), p. 161.

never questions God's justice or allows Divine Judgment to be questioned'[21], and 'Divine providence and poetic justice rule all.'[22] In *Leir* God is just and vengeful against sinners and totally supports the virtuous, as the pious character Perillus expresses: 'Oh just *Jehova*, whose almighty power / Doth governe all things in this spacious world' (*Leir* II. 1649-1650). Leir's blessing of Cordelia at the end of the play again echoes the character's belief in the divine power of benevolent God: 'which the God of *Abraham* gave / Unto the trybe of *Juda*, light on thee / And multiply thy dayes, that thou mayst see / Thy childrens children proper after thee' (*Leir* II. 2326-2329).

Shakespeare, however, deliberately changes this clear morality into ambiguity by providing his play with a tragic ending. In *King Lear*, the gods 'are anything but the surest friends, while their justice is far from clear; there seem little obvious compensation and little or no preliminary savouring of the joys of immortality.'[23] The tragic ending

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[21] W. R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (Lexington: The University of Kentuchy Press, 1988), p.70.

[22] Ibid., p. 70.

[23] Ibid., p. 64.

preliminary savouring of the joys of immortality.'[23] The tragic ending provokes the sense of a mysterious and inscrutable divine power, whose workings are beyond human comprehension. The uncertainty towards Divine Providence manifested in *King Lear*, is, to a large extent, a reflection of the religious skepticism of the Renaissance era.

In the later Elizabethan and Jacobean periods there was a crisis in religion which affected the belief in Providence. A number of trends which developed during the Renaissance contributed to an increasing religious skepticism. The New Learning advocated by Renaissance humanists encouraged men to question before believing what they were told. The Reformation, led by Martin Luther (1483-1546), was 'a successful heresy which struck at the very basis of the institutionalism of the Roman Catholic Church.'[24] In addition, the new Copernican view of the cosmos pictured the sun, not the earth, as the centre of the universe. This reversal of the long-accepted order caused confusion

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[23] Ibid., p. 64.

[24]M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), p.156.

and anxiety. As Donne put it in his 'First Anniversary', the 'new Philosophy cals all in doubt.'[25]

These developments challenged the long established medieval view of God. They coincided with the Renaissance revival of Epicureanism, which stressed the centrality of humanity, and Calvinism, which argued for an incomprehensible and unappeasable God, 'whose judgments of election and reprobation were beyond human intervention.'[26] During these periods, 'two attitudes towards divine providence... seem to have gained ground':[27] 'First, that providence, if it existed, had little or no relation to the particular affairs of individual men; and second, that it operated in ways bafflingly inscrutable and hidden to human reason.'[28] During the

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[25] John Donne, 'First Anniversary', II, 205. in *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1985), p. 335.

[26] Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, p. 9.

[27] Ibid., p. 9.

[28] Ibid., p. 9.

Jacobean period, the time when Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, God's existence and His Divine Providence were increasingly questioned.

Such changes in the relations between humankind and the Deity inevitably provided an altered climate for tragedy. Shakespeare and his contemporaries had little use for poetic justice as a working principle. The growing religious skepticism of the Renaissance caused writers to refuse to believe in poetic justice, in which the victory of virtue came from God's providence. As Elton sums up: 'Rather than acting out a meaningful role pointing towards the Last Judgment, Renaissance man might at times resemble a trivial plaything for the amusement of questionably benevolent higher powers.'[29] The 'providence-question climate'[30] which prevails in *Lear* is also exposed in some works written by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine, like [his] Faustus, views

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[29] Elton, 'Shakespeare and the thought of his age' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, p. 32.

[30]Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, p. 17.

God as a repressive force';[31] in fact, God is not associated with love and mercy in any of Marlowe's works.

At the end of *King Lear*, despite Albany's invoking divine solicitude with 'The Gods defend her!' (*Lear* V. iii. 255), Lear enters with the dead Cordelia in his arms. In this sense, the play 'signals no impending divine judgment.'[32] Moreover, death is signified as final. Lear's mourning of Cordelia's death ('Thou'lt come no more' [V. iii. 307]) is purely the attitude of a pagan mourner and without any sign of the Christian view of heavenly reunion. Regarding Kent's disillusioned question, 'Is this the promised end?' (*Lear* V. iii. 264), Kiefer states that 'These questioners envisage nothing less than the end of the world.'[33]

Although the Renaissance marks the birth of the modern world, the early Elizabethan picture remained very much a Medieval one. It is a world filled with hidden menace and frightening omens. Belief in the

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[31] Ibid., p. 23.

[32] Kiefer, p. 301.

[33] Ibid., p. 301

influence of the stars upon man's life was held by a majority of Shakespeare's audience. As Elton points out: 'The Elizabethan universe still held to Aristotelian premises of teleology, or purposefulness, and causal action.'[34] Renaissance concern with causation may be seen in Lear's pagan interrogation of the 'philosopher' regarding the 'cause of thunder' (*Lear* III. iv. 150-151) given that it was traditionally regarded as a divine manifestation. Lear's question seems to be connected with the nature of what belongs to God.

In contrast to the optimistic idea of progress, Renaissance Reformers emphasized humanity's fallen nature, making 'The primitive Edenic "golden age" . . . irrecoverable.'[35] According to the Renaissance view, nature had degenerated: 'physically, man was a pygmy compared to his longer-lived progenitors; artistically, the ancients may have been superior.'[36] Accordingly, the concluding lines

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[34] Elton, 'Shakespeare and the thought of his age', p. 22.

[35] Ibid., p. 18.

[36]Ibid., p. 19.

of *King Lear* pronounce that the young 'Shall never see so much nor live so long' (*Lear* V. iii. 325-326).

To a large extent, nature as portrayed in *King Lear* seems not so very different from what Gloucester contemplates when he speaks of 'ruinous disorders' all around him (*Lear* I. ii. 113). Lear's questioning of the cause in nature 'that makes these hard hearts' (*Lear* III. vi. 77-8) also reveals that nature is not orderly and benevolent but chaotic and seemingly dominated by Fortune.[37]

Kiefer points out that 'Nature in *King Lear* cannot be described without acknowledging the extraordinary role played by Fortune.'[38] Because of the increasing skepticism of the Renaissance, 'in place of a special providence, capricious Fortune, with its counterpoise of *virtu*, or personal power, was reemphasized in Machiavelli (1469-1527) and other Renaissance writers.'[39] The concept of Fortune appears to characterize the general atmosphere of the Renaissance, and may be

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[37] Kiefer, p. 293.

[38] Ibid., p. 296.

[39]Elton, 'Shakespeare and the thought of his age', p. 25.

connected with the tragic outcome of *King Lear*. Kiefer argues that 'Cordelia's murder is entirely consistent with the operation of Fortune,'[40] and 'Cordelia herself speaks of Fortune shortly before her death':[41]

> We are not the first
> Who with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.
> For thee, oppressed king, I am cast down,
> Myself could else out-frown false Fortune's frown.
>
> *Lear* V. iii. 3-6

The fatalistic overtone in Renaissance tragedy is due to the influence of Senecan tragedy, where gods or goddesss did not actively interfere in human destiny or intervene on behalf of good. This

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[40] Kiefer, p. 296.

[41] Ibid., p. 216.

coincides with the Renaissance view that even if God exists, He is not directly concerned and actively engaged in human affairs. As in Senecan tragedies, there is no guarantee at all that the 'The Gods are just' (*Lear* V. iii. 170), as Edgar claims in *Lear*.[42] Although it does appear that evil is punished, the gods give very little evidence of supporting virtue by allowing Cordelia to die. Shakespeare's exploration of the nature of evil and its place in the universe, as shown in *Othello* and *Lear*, seems to coincide with the view prevalent in Senecan tragedies.

Moreover, Renaissance dramatists believed that the presentation of God's justice as the immediate cause of everything would 'lose tragedy in didacticism.'[43] These dramatists' priority was to explore the intensity of tragic experience. Hunter's analysis of Marlowe's prologue to *Tamburlaine* provides a good summary of the major features of Renaissance tragedy:

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[42] It is interesting to note that Edgar's last speech (which sums up the play) carries a minimum conviction of divine power, and vastly differs from his previous pronouncement that 'The Gods are just' (V. iii. 170) when he is exacting justice on Edmund.

[43] Hunter, 'Shakespeare and the traditions of tragedy', p. 126.

> 'I will lead you,' says Marlowe, 'into a drama which is (like Kyd's tragedia *cothurnata*) 'stately', concerned with lofty characters and terrifying action, powerfully projected by a language of superhuman energy. The story will show the audience the hero as the victim of fortune (as in so-called 'tragedies' heretofore), but this protagonist will not be one who is simply the victim of fortune. Though he must fall, Tamburlaine will challenge the limits of destiny. It may be that, seeing his fortunes in the 'tragic glass', you will applaud this challenge instead of feeling dismay at the mere fact of challenge.[44]

True tragedy, then, should be characterized by sublimity, and suffering is a mark of dignity for the tragic hero. Terror should be prominent; there should an ending which does not simply 'justify the ways of God but indicates that the tragic power of great men lies in their capacity to defy necessity.'[45]

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[44] Ibid., p. 125.

[45] Ibid., p. 126.

Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* are claimed by critics to have provided Shakespeare with the prime model for the concepts and the expectations of tragedy.[46] These two dramatists wrote tragedies of terrifying experience in which the tremendous loss or death of the tragic hero 'may be thought to be compensated by an increased sense of the variousness of tragic experience.'[47]

King Lear is a tragedy of this kind. As in Senecan tragedies, goodness, although powerless to shape events and unassisted by benevolent gods, can support or endure the hardship of life. With the shifting of the centre of the world from God to humanity, the awakening of the individual's self-consciousness in the Renaissance age took its expression from the stoic philosophy of Senecan tragedy. Stoicism's selfhood is manifested in qualities like self-knowledge, self-discovery, self-control, self-sufficiency and self-responsibility.

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[46] Ibid., p. 127.

[47] Ibid., p. 125.

In Renaissance tragedy, that a tragic protagonist is shown personally to be responsible for his fall is at the same time an indication of individualism. Take Lear, for example: since his pride and egotism violate the natural law, he has to suffer the consequences of his misfortune. This new emphasis on self-responsibility and self-reliance instead of total submission to God can also be seen as an expression of individual self-consciousness. Eliot says that '*King Lear* is often taken as the most Senecan [tragedy] in spirit,'[48] and Lear has many parallels with a classical Senecan tragic hero. His passionate rage, his uncontrollable anger, his quest for revenge on his daughters, his madness, his prayer for patience[49] and his desperate need of reason are typical of the predicament of a Senecan tragic hero who desires stoic self-control.

According to stoicism, the tragic hero must endure suffering. More importantly, suffering is not the end, because it generates knowledge; and this is a point which is clearly demonstrated in *King Lear*. As

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[48] T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1934), p. 44.

[49] The significance of Lear's praying for patience will be explored in Chapter Three.

king, Lear does not 'know himself'. Only by suffering on the heath does he gain self-knowledge and come to recognize his true daughter. Lear's pilgrimage through suffering brings him not only recognition that his judgment is mistaken, but also a new humility. This point is highlighted by Lear's kneeling down and asking forgiveness from Cordelia. In this, he signals his regained human compassion and awareness of the misery of human existence. Thus, for all its darkness and potential for destructiveness, suffering can lead to growth in the virtues of courage and love. It produces an appreciation of truth, beauty, and goodness. Denying the value of all this makes the didactic doctrine of poetic justice look narrow and trite. Lear's death seems to be relatively unimportant in comparison with the spiritual value obtained and the wisdom he has learned painfully. After all the pain and suffering, as Kent says at the end of the play:

> Vex not his ghost: O! Let him pass; he hates him
> That would upon the rack of this tough world
> Stretch him out longer.
>
> *Lear* V.iii. 312-314

As Elton points out 'Rather than in the complacent satisfactions of

poetic justice, many among Shakespearean tragic audiences may be said to have participated in a solemn celebration of the irreducible mystery of human suffering.'[50]

In Shakespeare's *As You Like it*, Jaques considers that 'All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players' (II, vii. 140-141). Concerning this point, Elton argues: 'Shakespeare's era topically and repeated figured the world as stage, and man as actor in temporary and borrowed costume, strutting and fretting his meaningless hour.'[51] According to Elton the view that the world is a 'stage' thus reflects the general feeling of life in the Renaissance era.

This view of life should not be regarded as pessimistic. Shakespeare and his contemporary dramatists simply turn to 'the stage to depict man's worldly estate'[52] and use drama to portray the nature of life. Although in *Lear* nature is represented on the one hand as chaotic and disordered through Edmund and the two evil sisters; on

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[50] Elton, 'Shakespeare and the thought of his age', p. 26.

[51] Ibid., p. 32.

[52] Ibid., p. 32.

the other hand, as many commentators have found, it is represented as a 'divinely ordained cosmic scheme',[53] which can be observed through Cordelia and the loyalty of the other characters in the play. Although 'virtue... may not readily achieve the destruction of evil, but there can be no doubt that the courage of Cordelia and the devotion of Kent and of Edgar'[54] make the audience feel that 'goodness is a more potent force in *King Lear*'[55] than evil. Like other tragedies of Shakespeare, the play involves a recognition of moral law that results in the punishment of the wrong doers. The wages of sin are always death, though the reward of virtue is seldom happiness.

Neoclassicists' Requirement of Poetic Justice in Tragedy

Restoration dramatists' criticism of Shakespeare's tragedies for violation of poetic justice and lack of moral instruction is based

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[53] Kiefer, p. 288.

[54] Ibid., p. 302.

[55] Ibid., p. 302.

entirely on the grounds of the disparity between the new precepts of tragedy and Shakespeare's dramatic practice, and shows little concern for Renaissance culture and tragic dramaturgy. However, at the same time, this criticism also indicates that poetic justice was held by Restoration critics to be a paramount principle and almost the only means to convey morality in tragedy.

The concept of poetic justice is based upon the theory that the function of tragedy is didactic; the term 'poetic justice' itself is believed to have been coined by Rymer.[56] Neoclassicists claimed that the didactic principle of poetic justice was derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*. But though Aristotle implies that the process of experiencing tragic emotions of pity and fear is morally beneficial, such a result is achieved obliquely, and is not the deliberate intention of the poet. Thus his *Catharsis* is not the same as poetic justice. There is no indication in the *Poetics* that Aristotle has made poetic justice a part of his concept of tragedy. On the contrary, his belief that in tragedy 'The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but, reversely,

from good to bad'[57] shows his disagreement with the view that poetic justice should be applied in tragedy. It is true that Aristotle does not categorically deny that tragedy can end happily, but he strongly implies that a proper ending has to be a tragic one;[58] and he recommends that the happy ending 'belongs rather to comedy.'[59]

Poetic justice, then, is not an Aristotelian principle. It is however implied in Horace's idea of the *dulce et utile.*[60] In the *Ars Poetica*, Horace states that 'The poet's aim is either to profit or to please, or to

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[56] E. Rothstein, *Restoration Tragedy: Form and the Process of Change* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 5.

[57] Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, ed. S. H. Butcher (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1936), XIII. 4., p. 47.

[58] Aristotle, 'On the Art of Poetry' in *Aristotle / Horace / Longinus: Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 47 & p. 49.

[59] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, XIV. 8. p. 49.

[60] Joan C. Grace, *Tragic Theory in the Critical Works of Thomas Rymer, John Dennis, and John Dryden* (London: Associated University Presses, 1975), p. 43.

blend in one the delightful and the useful,'[61] and he continues: 'the man who mingles the useful with the sweet carries the day by charming his reader and at the same time instructing him.'[62] Horace points out that the poet aims both to teach morality and to please the audience. Neoclassicists believe that Horatian pleasure is derived from watching virtue being rewarded and vice punished; thus Horatian theory is associated with poetic justice. In analyzing Horace's theory, Rothstein points out that Horace emphasizes the moral utility of tragedy:

> As the Horatian balance between the two [morality and pleasure] is tilted in favor of the moral, the embellishments begin to function as persuasives, enticing the reader or spectator through the disguised precepts of virtue so that he may not only learn them but keep

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[61] Horace, *The Art of Poetry* in *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940), p. 139.

[62] Ibid., p. 139.

> pleasant recollections of having done so. In other words, art, *qua* art, is to act as rhetoric.[63]

Horatian poetic theory has had a profound influence on the literary criticism of succeeding ages. For example, in his *Poetics* (1561), Julius Caesar Scaliger states that a tragedy 'should teach, move, and please' (III, xcvii)[64] and that it is 'the primary didactic function of tragedy to encourage a love of virtue and a hatred of vice' (VII, 1, iii).[65] Since he assigns this moral purpose to tragedy, it is believed by most critics that the principle of poetic justice was possibly derived from Scaliger.

The seventeenth century French critic Rapin, who was influenced by Scaliger, advocates the principle of poetic justice in his commentary on Aristotle, and many other French critics also followed

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[63] Rothstein, pp. 3-4.

[64] F. M. Padelford, *Select Translations from Scaliger's 'Poetics,'* Yale Studies in English, XXVI (New York, 1905), p. 60. quoted by John Dale Ebbs in his *The Principle of Poetic Justice Illustrated in Restoration Tragedy* (Salzburg, Austria: University of Salzburg, 1973), p. 23.

[65] Ibid., p. 23.

this principle. Moreover, it was believed by critics at the time that the Horatian balance of *utile* and *dulce* was weighted to a certain extent in favour of moral instruction. In his *Reflections sur la Poetique d'Aristote* (1674), Rapin further clarifies the moral emphasis of tragedy. He states: 'Pleasure is only the means by which the Profit is convey'd, and all Poetry, when 'tis perfect, ought of necessity to be a Publick Lesson of good Manners for the Instruction of the World.'[66] In line with Rapin, Rymer argues that 'I am confident whoever writes a Tragedy cannot please but must also profit; 'tis the Physick of the mind that he makes palatable.'[67]

Dryden was at one with Rymer in his belief in the priority of the didactic purpose in tragedy:

> 'Tis the moral that directs the whole action of the play to one centre; and that action or Fable, is the example built

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[66]René Rapin, *Reflexions sur la Poetique d'Aristote*, trans. Thomas Rymer (London, 1694), p.14. quoted by Ebbs in *The Principle of Poetic Justice*, p. 43.

[67] Rymer, 'The Tragedies of the Last Age' in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Volume I, pp.195-196.

> upon the moral, which confirms the truth of it to our experience: when the Fable is design'd, then and not before, the Persons are to be introduc'd with their manner, Characters and passions.[68]

Neoclassicists claimed that their theory that the tragic plot should be a moral fable was supported by Aristotle. But when, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle considers plot to be 'the soul of tragedy',[69] his intention is most likely to emphasize that the importance of tragedy lies in the action rather than the characters. Thus neoclassicists appear to have modified Aristotle's notion of the centrality of the plot in order to strengthen their idea of the plot as a moral fable. [70]

In addition, the neoclassical conception of a moral fable is associated with the depiction of poetic justice in tragedy. As Dennis put it: 'For what Tragedy can there be without a Fable? or what Fable without a Moral, or what Moral without poetical Justice? What Moral,

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[68] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 256.

[69] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, VI. 14. p. 29.

[70] Rothstein, p. 10.

where the Good and the Bad are confounded by Destiny, and perish alike promiscuously?'[71] Dennis's statement stresses that poetic justice is the means by which the moral is enforced in the fable or tragedy.

Poetic justice was clearly manifested in the critical writings of Dryden and Rymer. In *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), Dryden recommended that 'the Encouragement of Virtue, and Discouragement of Vice, be the proper End of Poetry in Tragedy.'[72] In the *Essay*, Eugenius, who debates for the Moderns, criticizes the drama of the Ancients for not always showing virtue rewarded and vice punished: 'in the instructive part they have erred worse: instead of punishing vice and rewarding virtue, they have shown a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety.'[73] In his 'Heads of an Answer to Rymer', Dryden clearly enunciates his view of the importance of the depiction of poetic justice in tragedy. He states: '[Not] only Pity and

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[71] *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore, 1939-43), pp. 19-20.

[72] Dryden, quoted by Joseph Wood Krutch in *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 79.

[73] Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatic Poetry* in *Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 615.

Terror are to be moved as the only Means to bring us to Virtue, but generally love to Virtue, and Hatred to Vice, by showing rewards of one and punishments of the other.'[74]

Rymer's concept of poetic justice dominated English speculation on tragedy for at least the next fifty years. From the end of the seventeenth century and throughout most of the eighteenth century, poetic justice came to be part of the neoclassic creed and a requirement for tragedy.

The principle of poetic justice - rewarding virtue and punishing vice - requires the positive representation of Divine Providence. Rymer not only clearly states that tragedy should teach by 'observing that constant order, that harmony and beauty of Providence',[75] but also makes *catharsis* the handmaid of theology. In disagreement with Aristotle, who states that it is through pity and fear that the audience experiences tragic pleasure and 'accomplish[es] the *catharsis* of such

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[74] Dryden, 'Heads of an Answer to Rymer' in *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, Volume 1, p.198.

[75] Rymer, 'The Tragedies of the Last Age', p. 196.

emotions',[76] Rymer emphasizes that tragic *catharsis* can be experienced only through observing the beauty of God's dispensation.

This requirement of divine judgment in tragedy does not indicate that Christian faith was stronger during the Restoration. On the contrary, it suggests something quite opposite: the urgent need for the reassurance of God's justice in an age when a mechanistic view of the universe was threatening faith in Providence. Responding to this threat, Restoration dramatists believed that drama should be used to confirm Divine Providence. Otherwise, they reasoned, the stage representation would destroy confidence in God's providence and produce a state of moral anarchy.

Like Rymer, Dennis links Divine Providence with poetic justice, reinforcing the idea that religion should be used to teach morality: 'The great Design of Arts is to restore the Decays that happen'd to human Nature by the Fall, by restoring Order.'[77] He further states that

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[76] Aristotle, 'On the Art of Poetry', trans. T. S. Dorsch, p. 48.

[77] Dennis, quoted by R. D. Stock in *Samuel Johnson and Neoclassical Dramatic Theory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 108.

'Poetick justice would be a Jest if it were not an Image of the Divine, and if it did not consequently suppose the Being of a God and Providence.'[78] Thus it is clear that neoclassicists insist that virtue must be rewarded in order to show Divine Providence is at work.

In his 'A Short View of Tragedy', Rymer severely criticizes Shakespeare's *Othello* as lacking a moral lesson, since the virtuous Desdemona is killed at the end of the play. 'What instruction can we make out of this Catastrophe?' he asks. 'Is not this to envenome and sour our spirits, to make us repine and grumble at Providence; and the government of the World; If this be our end, what boots it to be Vertuous?'[79] Ignoring the idea that virtue is its own reward, Rymer here seems to suggest that the reason for being virtuous is to be rewarded, and Cordelia's death, then, makes Shakespeare's *King Lear*

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[78] Dennis, in 1698 in his reply to Collier in *The Usefulness of the Stage*, quoted by Stock in *Samuel Johnson and Neoclassical Dramatic Theory*, p. 107.

[79] Rymer, 'A Short View of Tragedy' in *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt A. Zimansky (New Haven, 1956), p. 161.

another example of falsifying 'the moral structure of Providence and the teachings of prudential morality.'[80]

When poetry is expected to be an imitation of the providential ordering of the universe, the logical consequence is that poetic justice simultaneously requires the interpretation of nature as ideal. Failing to comprehend Renaissance historical context and dramatic conventions, Rymer condemns the nature represented in Shakespeare's tragedies as 'a corrupt and deprav'd *Nature*'[81] which contains no moral instruction. The imitation of nature spoken of by Restoration critics as a literary doctrine meant selected nature, ideal nature - *'la belle nature.'* Such 'nature' is so arranged and ordered as to reveal the divine plan. Thus poetic justice was intimately allied to an idealistic conception of poetry, a conception which was favoured by Sidney, stressed by Rymer, promoted by Dryden, and followed by the majority of critics in the eighteenth century.

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[80] Ibid., p. 161.

[81] Ibid., p. 189.

Rymer demonstrated the necessity of imitating ideal nature by distinguishing between poetry and history. In *The Tragedies of the Last Age*, Rymer states:

> [We find] in History the same end happen to the righteous and to the unjust, vertue often opprest, and wickedness on the Throne: they [the ancient Greek dramatists] saw these particular yesterday-truths were imperfect and unproper to illustrate the universal and eternal truths by them intended. Finding also that this unequal distribution of rewards and punishments did perplex the wisest, and by the Atheist was made a scandal to the Divine Providence, They concluded, that a poet must of necessity see justice exactly administred, if he intended to please.[82]

Rymer realized that in history the righteous and the unjust came to the same end, that virtue was oppressed, and that wickedness throve on the throne. Therefore, he believed that the particular truths of history

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[82] Ibid., p. 187.

were incapable of revealing universal and eternal truths; they contributed nothing to the teaching of morality. This is not only because people can scarcely reconcile the mystery of life's undeserved suffering with faith in God, but also they cannot accept such an administration of justice by poets. Thus Rymer argued that what is unpleasant in actuality can never please the audience unless poetic justice is observed. For this reason, the poet must necessarily imitate the ideal rather than real life if he wishes to please.[83]

Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history in the *Poetics* was claimed by Restoration critics to be the authority of their belief in poetry's imitation of ideal nature. Although Aristotle says that 'Poetry is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular',[84] he also states that 'The poet ... must of necessity imitate one of three objects, things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things

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[83] In this respect, Rymer's view again differs from that of Aristotle, who believed that even what is painful in life, when imitated gives pleasure.

[84] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, IX. 3-4. p. 35.

as they ought to be.'[85] Thus Aristotle does not deny the poet's right to choose to imitate 'things as they are', as Shakespeare does.

Restoration criticism inherited a doctrine already prevalent in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* (1595). Sidney prefers poetry to history because of its superior power to instruct and to delight. He points out that history is 'tied not to what should be but to what it is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things.'[86] Sidney believes that it is the ability to transcend fact which enables the poet to surpass historians in his service to society. He states: 'If the question be for your own use and learning, whether it be better to have it set down as it should be, or as it was, then certainly is more doctrinable the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justin, and the feigned Aeneas in Vergil than the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius.'[87] Sidney stresses that the 'feigned example' instructs pleasurably: 'Right poets', he believes, 'imitate to teach and delight,

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[85] Ibid., p. 97.

[86] Sidney, *The Defense of Poesie* in *Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 420.

[87] Ibid., p. 423.

and to imitate nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be.'[88]

Dryden's critical works show that he is in accordance with the view that tragedy should imitate 'Nature wrought up to an higher pitch.'[89] In the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, he states:

> 'Tis not necessary that there should be Historical truth in it; but always necessary that there should be a likeness of truth, something that is more than barely possible, probable being that which succeeds or happens oftner than it misses. To invent therefore a probability, and to make it wonderfull, is the most difficult undertaking in the Art of Poetry: for that which is not wonderfull, is not great, and that which is not probable, will not delight a reasonable Audience.[90]

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[88] Ibid., p. 415.

[89] Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in *Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 653.

[90] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 253.

Dryden realizes that while constructing his own special imitation, the poet ought to provide some resemblance to the actual world in order to illustrate a moral truth. Moreover, Dryden emphasizes that what is 'wonderfull' is what is expected in poetic imitation. His view concurs with the point which Rapin makes in his *Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* (1674) that 'a poet does not simply copy nature; rather, he must choose in *her* what is *beautiful*, from what is *not*.'[91] Thus it is clear that Dryden believes that poetic imitation should be according to the ideal rather than what one actually sees in nature.

The term 'probable' or 'probability', meaning a sense of what is reasonable or likely, 'based on one's experience of actual life',[92] is repeatedly used by Dryden in the statement quoted above. Because of the enlightenment through science and philosophy, the Restoration and the eighteenth century were times of commitment to reason. The

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[91] Rapin, *Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie*, trans. Thomas Rymer (London, 1694) p. 57. quoted by Stock in *Samuel Johnson and Neoclassical Theory*, p. 31.

[92] P. J. Smallwood, *Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1985), p.93.

rationalized view of the world can be seen in the emphasis on reason and common sense in Restoration tragedy.

The principle of poetic justice - the need for virtue to be rewarded and vice punished - was seen as an expression of rationality. In Restoration criticism, both Dryden and Rymer emphasize the word 'probable' (or 'probability'), a term which was closely associated with conceptions such as reason, rationality or common sense. Rymer judged *Othello* 'improbable' because he considered the plot and the characters of the play to be against common sense. As Grace observes, 'The test of probability eventually becomes for Dryden a matter of whether or not the play as a whole gives pleasure to the audience.'[93] When Dryden states that presenting what ideally 'should be' can 'delight the reasonable audience', the word reasonable here is essentially identical to 'normal', 'rational', and to Rymer's conception of common sense. In explaining his alteration of the conclusion to *King Lear* from a tragic ending to a happy one, Tate makes it clear in the preface to *The History*(p. 2.) that he was following Dryden's

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[93] Grace, p. 113.

authoritative opinion, aiming to create probability in order to meet the requirement of art.

The principle of probability in dramatic construction which Dryden 'consistently upholds',[94] was stressed by Aristotle. Although the latter states that 'The poet should choose probable impossibilities rather than incredible possibilities',[95] he also points out that 'it is probable that a thing may happen contrary to probability.'[96] Thus the Aristotelian concept of 'probability' was adapted by Restoration critics, who interpreted it rather narrowly.

In *The Spectator* No. 40 (1711), Addison objected to the enforcement of poetic justice in tragedy, arguing that Tate's insertion of this principle in *King Lear* destroyed the beauty of Shakespeare's original version. Addison explains: 'I do not therefore dispute against this Way of writing Tragedies, but against the Criticism that would establish this as the only Method; and by that Means would very

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[94] Ibid., p. 125.

[95] Aristotle, *The Poetics* in *Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 107.

[96] Ibid., p. 112.

much cramp the English Tragedy and perhaps give a wrong Bent to the Genius of our Writers.'[97] Thus he is against the mechanical formula of virtue rewarded and vice punished. His plea is for authenticity and for more freedom in the dramatist's construction of tragedy. Addison's argument shows his better understanding of tragedy in general and of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in particular:

> The English Writers of Tragedy are possessed with a Notion, that when they represent a virtuous or innocent Person in Distress, they ought not to leave him till they have delivered him out of his Troubles, or made him triumph over his Enemies. This Error they have been led into by a ridiculous Doctrine in Modern Criticism, that they are obliged to an equal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments....Who were the first that established this Rule I know not; but I am sure it has no Foundation in Nature, in Reason, or in the Practice of the Ancients. We find that Good and Evil happen alike to all Men on this

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[97] Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 40 (1711) in *Addison and Steele*, p. 157.

> Side the Grave; and as the principal Design of Tragedy is to raise Commiseration and Terror in the Minds of the Audience, we shall defeat this great End, if we always make Virtue and Innocence happy and successful.[98]

Addison here lists the reasons for his protest against the notion of poetic justice. Firstly, he argues that the doctrine is not rational; it is against 'Reason' and 'Nature.' He believes that since 'Good and Evil happen alike to all Men on this Side the Grave', it is natural and reasonable for the poet to choose not to represent virtue as triumphant. In this sense, Addison approves of Shakespeare's representation of nature - to 'Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say' (*Lear* V. iii. 324) - and disagrees with the general neoclassical precept that tragedy ought to imitate the ideal.

Secondly, Addison rightly argues that poetic justice is not 'in the practice of the Ancients.' To ancient Greek dramatists, tragedy stresses irretrievable loss. In tragedies written by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the suffering of heroes is always

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[98] Ibid., p. 155.

represented as excessive, and death is normally the result. Renaissance tragedy inherited these features with the revival of classical knowledge. For the ancient Greeks, suffering itself yielded knowledge, because it involved both physical ordeal and mental or spiritual anguish. The *anagnorisis* - recognition of the truth via the passage of suffering - is regarded as the most valuable knowledge of all, and makes hardship endurable. For Aristotle, the recognition of truth is 'A discovery', which he says, 'is a change from ignorance to knowledge.'[99]

Thirdly, Addison argues that if 'Virtue and Innocence' are always made happy and successful, the possibility of evoking tragic feelings of pity and fear would be destroyed. Unlike the tragic hero in Restoration tragedy, who is normally required to be a model of propriety, the characteristics of the tragic hero are, for Aristotle, directly related to the hero's ability to engage in tragic action and not to his value as a model of moral excellence.[100] The downfall of the

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[99] Aristotle, 'On the Art of Poetry', trans. Dorsch, p. 46.

[100] Abrams, p. 190.

tragic hero is brought about by his *hamartia* - that is, his error of judgment (which in the Renaissance became the tragic flaw) - for which the tragic protagonist has to be punished. The pity arises from the fact that the hero is not evil by nature and his misfortune is greater than he deserves; the fear comes from our recognition that the same fate could befall ourselves. Addison emphasizes the value of pity and fear, because he believes that these emotions 'leave a pleasing Anguish in the Mind; and fix the Audience in such a serious Composure of Thought, as is much more lasting and delightful than any little transient Starts of Joy and Satisfaction.'[101] In this respect, his view closely follows Aristotle's concept of *catharsis* (in Greek, meaning 'purgation' or 'purification') and the Aristotelian emphasis that it is through pity and fear that the audience gains tragic pleasure by 'accomplish [ing] the *catharsis* of such emotions.'[102]

Although Dryden stated the importance of arousing tragic emotions of pity and fear, he also emphasized the conception of 'a pleasing

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[101] Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 40, p. 156.

[102] Abrams, p. 190.

admiration and concernment'[103] in tragedy. James Black argues that 'The playwrights of the Restoration were less interested in the spiritual value of Aristotelian terror than in collecting the small change of "agreeable uneasiness."'[104] In order to delight audiences and ensure that they would not be emotionally shocked or brutalized, the tragic 'fear' of Aristotle was occasionally replaced by 'admiration' and love scenes. This is because, for Restoration dramatists, 'gentleness' and 'delightfulness' were able to 'temper' the 'superstition and terror' which 'the ancient tragedy caused us.'[105] In addition, pitying virtue in 'distress' was considered to be the important passion in Restoration tragedy. It was regarded as 'current emotional coin at the time',[106] and is reflected in Tate's decision to 'heighten' the distress of the plot by inserting the love of Edgar and Cordelia.

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[103] Black, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.

[104] Ibid., p. xxviii.

[105] Saint-Evremond, *De la Tragedie ancienne et moderne* (1672) in *Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 662.

[106] Black, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.

After expressing his views on poetic justice, Addison concluded that *King Lear* is as admirable a tragedy 'as Shakespeare wrote; but as it is reformed according to the chymerical Notion of Poetic Justice, in my humble Opinion, it has lost half its Beauty.'[107] It is clear that Addison's evaluation of the beauty of tragedy at this point is essentially based on Aristotelian standards and the practice of the Ancients. Addison insists that art ought to be true to life, and that a good tragedy should be the 'Production of human Nature.' He believes that only on this basis is it 'capable of giving the Mind one of the most delightful and most improving Entertainments', thereby combining instruction with pleasure.[108] Addison's protest shows his wider understanding of the aesthetic value of tragedy. However, his view did not affect the mainstream neoclassicists in their insistence on poetic justice as the paramount principle in tragedy.

Responding to Addison's opposition to poetic justice, Dennis argued:

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[107] Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 40, p. 156.

[108] Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 39, in *Addison and Steele*, p. 150.

'Tis certainly the Duty of every Tragick Poet, by an exact Distribution of a Poetical Justice, to imitate the Divine Dispensation, and to inculate a particular Providence. 'Tis true indeed upon the Stage of the World the Wicked sometimes prosper, and the Guiltless suffer. But that is permitted by the Governour of the World, to shew from the Attribute of his infinite Justice that there is a Compensation in futurity, to prove the Immortality of the Human Soul, and the Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments. But the Poetical Persons in Tragedy exist no longer than the Reading or the Representation; the whole Extent of their Entity is circumscribed by those; and therefore during that Reading or Representation, according to their Merits of Demerits, they must be punish'd or rewarded. If this is not done, there is no impartial Distribution of Poetical Justice, no instructive Lecture of a particular Providence, and no Imitation of the Divine Dispensation.[109]

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[109] *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, p. 49.

Dennis's statement stresses that poetic justice is the means by which the moral is enforced in tragedy. In order to achieve tragedy's didactic aims, virtue ought to be rewarded in the present life - the life which is represented on the stage. To a certain extent, Dennis's strong defence of this principle illustrates the prominence of poetic justice as a neoclassical precept of tragedy. The further evidence for the importance attached to poetic justice is found in Johnson's comments on Shakespeare's *Lear*.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Johnson took up the same point as Dennis - the absence of poetic justice - to criticize the 'moral insufficiency' of Shakespeare's *Lear*:

> Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles... A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of life; but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I can not easily be persuaded that the

> observation of justice makes a play worse; or that, if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue. [110]

Here Johnson's condemnation of the poet for suffering 'the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause' indicates that Johnson deplores Shakespeare's *King Lear* precisely on the same grounds as most of the neoclassical critics. Johnson further criticizes Shakespeare for disobeying 'the faith of the chronicles' (the source of Shakespeare's *Lear* which contained clear Christian providential justice). Johnson shows that he strongly disagrees with Shakespeare's rejection of the instructive ending, a rejection which undercuts the confident assertions of divine design in *The Chronicle History of King Leir.*

But Johnson continues: 'A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of life.' Despite censuring Shakespeare for insufficient morality at the beginning of the same

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[110] *Johnson on Shakespeare*, pp. 161-62.

statement, Johnson does not object to the poet's copying nature, for this is the way life is. The inconsistency reflected here also appears in his *Preface to Shakespeare*. On the one hand, Johnson praises Shakespeare as 'a poet of nature' whose 'just representations of general nature' 'please many, and please long';[111] yet, on the other hand, he criticises the lack of a 'moral plan' in Shakespeare's work.

Following his acknowledgment of the poet's right to imitate life as it is, Johnson makes a reversal by stating that 'all reasonable beings naturally love justice'. It is obvious that he stresses his essential point, which is that the poet should present the moral order to 'please the reasonable audience.' Johnson here emphasizes the point made by Restoration critics that drama should instruct by pleasing. The word 'reasonable', which was repeatedly emphasized by Dryden and Rymer, is also used by Johnson. After this, instead of specifically using the phrase 'poetic justice',[112] Johnson often employs the term 'justice' to mean 'poetic justice' and repeatedly uses the term ('the natural ideas of

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[111] Johnson, *The Preface to Shakespeare*, ed. P. J. Smallwood, p. 4.

justice', 'naturally love justice' and the 'observation of justice') in order to emphasize the necessity of the depiction of a higher form of justice: poetic justice in tragedy.

Johnson's insistence on poetic justice is made abundantly clear in the relevant part of his *Preface*, in which he expresses his first and most serious objection to what was regarded by him as 'the moral insufficiency' in Shakespeare's work:

> His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation

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[112] Smallwood observed that 'Johnson does not use the term 'poetical justice', a favourite critical term of his age, anywhere in the *Preface*.' Smallwood, p. 118.

> of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place.[113]

Johnson criticizes Shakespeare, accusing him of sacrificing 'virtue to convenience' and making 'no just distribution of good or evil.' Furthermore, Johnson resolutely refuses to excuse this 'moral deficiency' because of 'the barbarity or ignorance' of Shakespeare's age. Thus it is evident that, as a moralist, Johnson is not prepared to release the poet from his 'duty to make the world better.'

Johnson's belief in didacticism is epitomized by his preference for Tate's *Lear*:

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[113] Johnson, *The Works*, 7: 71. (Oxford, 1825) quoted by Stock in *Samuel Johnson and Neoclassical Dramatic Theory*, quoted by Stock, p. 118.

> In the present case the publick has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And if my sensations could add any thing to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.[114]

Although Johnson stresses his personal dismay at Cordelia's death, his comments also reflect the general critical opinion of his time. As James Black points out: 'Nearly a century after Tate's adaptation, it was still 'the general suffrage' which Samuel Johnson was inclined to obey in the matter of Tate's *Lear*.'[115]

It is clear that despite his claim of being a judicious literary critic, Johnson's judgment on Shakespeare's *King Lear* shows the relativity of the criteria of his age. In the *Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson emphasizes the importance of evaluating literary work in its historical

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[114] *Johnson on Shakespeare*, pp. 161-62.

[115] James Black, 'Introduction', p. xxxiv.

context. He states: 'Every man's performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived, and with his own particular opportunities.'[116] However, his unsympathetic judgment of Shakespeare's *Lear* shows that he did not actually put this theory into practice; and his seeming emphasis on the importance of historicising literary works merely indicates his awareness of this aspect. His evaluation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* illustrates that he has not in fact taken the Renaissance historical context and tragic dramaturgy sufficiently into account, especially where poetic justice is concerned. Meanwhile, Johnson's insistence on the indispensability of poetic justice in tragedy further indicates that the enduring stage success of Tate's version in the Restoration and the eighteenth century is largely due to his insertion of poetic justice in his adaptation of *King Lear*.

The persistence and vitality of this principle in neoclassical precepts of tragedy contributed to the failure of Colman's and Kean's

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[116] Johnson, *The Works* quoted by Stock, p. 142.

revivals of the tragic ending of Shakespeare's *Lear* in 1768 and 1823 respectively.

In 1768, George Colman restored the catastrophe of *King Lear*. However, this restoration was short-lived. One review at the time commented: '[Colman having] considerably heightened the distress of the catastrophe, we doubt very much whether humanity will give him her voice in preference to Tate.'[117] Concurring with this view, another wrote: 'We think his [Mr. Colman's] having restored the original distressed catastrophe is a circumstance not greatly in favour of humanity or delicacy of feeling, since it is now rather too shocking to be borne.'[118] Colman's version had fifteen performances and then 'faded from the stage' after 1773.[119]

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[117] *The Theatrical Review*, or *The New Companion to the Playhouse* (1772), I, 213. quoted by M. Mack in *King Lear in Our Time* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 15.

[118] Ibid., p. 15.

[119] James Black, 'An Augustan Stage-history: Nahum Tate's *King Lear*', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967), Volumes 4-6, May 1965 - Nov. 1967. p. 50.

In 1823, Kean took the important step of restoring the fifth act of *King Lear* 'as originally written by Shakespeare.'[120] However, the restoration of the tragic ending did not run smoothly, for 'Kean could not carry Mrs. W. West without difficulty - this is said to have set the audience into a laugh, which continued till the curtain dropt.'[121] James Black comments that the result of this performance accidentally justified 'Tate's qualms'[122] as expressed in the Preface to *The History*: 'I must have incumbered the Stage with dead Bodies, which Conduct makes many tragedies conclude with unseasonable jests.'[123] Thus Kean's restoration was not a success. Shakespeare's *Lear* was then kept off the stage until 1834, when Macready successfully restored the tragic ending and 'almost all of Shakespeare's text.'[124]

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[120]Ibid., p. 46.

[121] Ibid., p. 46.

[122] Ibid., p. 46.

[123] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History*', p. 2.

[124] Black, 'An Augustan Stage-history', p. 46.

The unsuccessful restorations of Shakespeare's tragic ending of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries demonstrate that poetic justice was for a long time required in tragedy, and that the reward of Cordelia's virtue was the important factor which ensured the stage success of Tate's *Lear*. The following chapter will explore the other significant aspect of Tate's happy ending - the survival of King Lear - and its crucial role in guaranteeing the play's popularity in the political climate of the Restoration.

Chapter Two

'the king's blest restoration':[125] Reshaping Lear in Accordance with Restoration Politics

For three centuries most critics have believed that rewarding Cordelia's virtue and so meeting the principle of poetic justice was Tate's only motive for altering the tragic ending of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. There is also little doubt that the general critical view holds that Tate's insertion of poetic justice was the determining factor for the enduring stage success of his version. However, the rewarding of Cordelia's virtue constitutes only one part of the happy ending; the other part - the happy survival of Lear - deserves equal attention.

In analysing Tate's removal of the tragic death of Lear in his adaptation, Solomon argues that 'a tragically mortal king without a throne was neither dramatically nor existentially acceptable to Tate's

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[125] Tate, *The History of King Lear*, V. vi. 118.

community, so Tate changed the play.'[126] Although restoring Lear to his throne is not the only factor Tate was concerned with when he altered the play, Solomon is certainly right in pointing out the close connection between Lear's survival and its significance for Tate's contemporary political situation. This chapter aims to demonstrate both that the restoration of Lear to his throne has particular relevance to the political strife during the Exclusion Crisis, and that it was designed to reinforce the Divine Right of Kings in order to support the reign of Charles II.

Tate appears not only to use certain aspects of Shakespeare's version, such as loyalty and obedience to reinforce the king's position, but also to create new opportunities to preach the Divine Right of Kings. Lear's 'blest restoration' (*History* V. vi. 118) in the play reconfirms that monarchy is divinely ordained and that the hereditary right of kings is indefeasible. By presenting the good characters as devoted to the monarchy, Tate emphasizes obedience and loyalty, qualities which are highly important in the doctrine of Divine Right.

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[126] J. Fisher Solomon, '*King* in Lear: A Semiotic for Communal Adaptation'. *American Journal of*

In order to further promote loyalty to the monarchy, Tate uses Filmer's patriarchal theory of the King's Divine Right, blending the concepts of father and king. Considering that the 1680s were years of unsettled crisis, the happy survival of Lear conveys a reassuring message of political stability, which was a significant element in the play's being 'well received by the audience'[127] in the Restoration theatre.

Lear's Happy Survival on Stage as a Symbol of Political Stability

In his 'Preface to *The History of King Lear'*, Tate does not reveal his political agenda, but explains that his purpose in adapting *Lear* is merely to 'Polish the Jewel' and 'rectify what was wanting in Regularity and Probability of the Tale.'[128] Spencer seems to be convinced by Tate's professed aesthetic purpose, and insists that 'political considerations had a minimum of direct effect on Tate's *The*

Semiotics, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1984), p. 63.

[127] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History'*, p. 2.

[128] Ibid., p. 1.

History of King Lear.'[129] However, a close examination of Tate's text reveals evidence that apart from aiming to meet aesthetic standards, Tate also made efforts to rework Shakespeare's *Lear* in accordance with the political parameters of the Restoration. The analysis is also favoured by some recent critics, who closely associate the play with the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis.

Maguire argues that Tate chose to rewrite Shakespeare's 'previously unadapted *Lear* because, among other reasons, the play could easily and safely comment on the 1678-1683 Exclusion Crisis.'[130] She further points out that 'Tate's *Lear* uniquely copies Tory party-line propaganda by using restoration, as well as regicide, to attack Exclusion.'[131] John M. Wallace concurs with this view by stating that

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[129] C. Spencer, *Nahum Tate* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), p. 68.

[130] Nancy Klein Maguire, 'Nahum Tate's *King Lear*: "the king's blest restoration."' *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth*, ed. Jean I. Marsden (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 30.

[131] John M. Wallace quoted by Maguire, p. 30.

'The audience in 1681 would have had to have been asleep if it failed to recognize it was watching another anti-Exclusion play.'[132]

The Exclusion Crisis (1678-1681) arose over the Whigs' plan to exclude Charles II's Catholic brother James from the succession. It created a power struggle between Charles II and his Whig opposition in Parliament led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftsbury. The Popish Plot, a supposed Catholic conspiracy to murder Charles II which was disclosed in 1678, is regarded as the major cause of the Exclusion Crisis.

The Popish Plot was a confidence trick hatched by Titus Oates, a renegade Anglican cleric, and his co-conspirator Israel Tonge. Oates claimed to have uncovered a plot to assassinate Charles II by the Jesuits, who wished to bring about the succession of his Roman Catholic brother James, Duke of York; the country would then be forcibly converted to Roman Catholicism. From the beginning this central lie was surrounded with a mass of confused allegations. 'All popish recusants were ordered to depart ten miles from London.... The

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[132]Ibid., p. 30.

houses of lords and commons joined in the hunt, examining witnesses, ordering arrests, adding to the confusion. Not until 1681 did the judicial murders cease.'[133]

During the political and religious uncertainty of the time, Oates' story seemed credible to many people. As Harris points out, the Popish Plot brought 'a new and terrifying immediacy to the problem of the catholic succession.'[134] Although the Popish Plot was fictitious, the succession issue it tackled was real. The plan of excluding the Catholic Duke of York from the throne first appeared two months after Titus Oates' 'exposure' of the Popish Plot in September 1678. In November of 1680, the House of Commons approved the second bill aimed at excluding James, and not until March of the next year did Charles II effectively destroy Parliamentary Exclusion by dissolving the Oxford Parliament and having Shaftsbury arrested and sent to the Tower.

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[133]G. N. Clark, *The Later Stuarts: 1660-1714*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 90.

[134] Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration Until the Exclusion Crisis*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 96.

As Jonathan Scott puts it: 'Oates's fiction of a papist design to kill the king [was] borrowed, like much else, from the plot crisis of 1640-2.'[135] Thus he concludes: 'the crisis the government endured from 1678-83 was largely a repeat screening of the crisis of the reign of Charles I.'[136] During the years of the Exclusion Crisis there was a deeply-rooted anxiety about further royal bloodshed, a fear that the royal catastrophe of the 1640s and 50s - the execution of Charles I and the horror of the Civil War - would be repeated. From the Tories' point of view, by interfering with the succession, the Whigs would undermine royal authority and would in effect depose a king. Thus Tory poets and dramatists 'obsessively emphasized the appalling parallels between regicide and Exclusion.'[137] The presentation of a king on the Restoration stage was taken seriously, and regicide and

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[135] Jonathan Scott, 'England's Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot' in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England.* ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 119.

[136] Jonathan Scott, 'Radicalism and Restoration: The Shape of the Stuart Experience,' *The Historical Journal* (1988), 31, p. 459.

[137] Maguire, p. 32.

deposition became extremely sensitive topics. The banning of Tate's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard II* is further proof of this sensitivity.

Despite Tate's attempt to turn his adaptation of *Richard II* into a piece of outright monarchist propaganda - 'Every Scene is full of Respect to Majesty and the dignity of Courts,' and 'not one alter'd Page but what breaths Loyalty'[138]- the play was immediately banned. Tate later tried to produce the play under the title *The Sicilian Usurper* (1681), apparently 'believing that an Italian setting might distance the connection between the play and the recent Deposition in England,'[139] but the play was banned once again. As Dobson observes: 'Charles was facing a House of Commons potentially the most dangerous since 1640, [and] no play depicting the feasibility of deposing an English monarch could possibly be tolerated.'[140]

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[138] The Preface to *Richard II* , quoted by Dobson in *The Making of the National Poet*, p. 81.

[139] Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 81.

[140] Ibid., p. 81.

When Tate rewrote *King Lear* in 1681, the Popish Plot and the Exclusion controversy were still lively issues. Tate could not afford to commit the same mistake as he had made with *Richard II*. On the contrary, Tate's *Lear* 'more than made amends'[141] by reinforcing the Divine Right of Kings, the doctrine 'that brought back Charles II to his father's throne,'[142] and also the doctrine on which Charles II depended to survive the crisis.

Figgis sums up the theory of the Divine Right of Kings, which, according to him, rests on the following propositions: Monarchy is a divinely ordained institution and Kings are accountable to God; the Hereditary right of kings is indefeasible; Non-resistance and passive obedience are enjoined by God. In discussing this doctrine, Figgis states:

> From the time that the conflict between King [Charles I] and Parliament entered upon its acute stage there grew up

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[141]Ibid., p. 81.

[142]John Neville Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 145.

> a passionate sentiment of loyalty to the Crown, which would be satisfied with nothing less than the doctrine of Divine Right in its extremest form. As a popular force in politics the theory hardly exerted much influence until the time of the Long Parliament. Henceforward Divine Right becomes the watchword of all supporters of the rights of the Crown, at least until the Revolution.[143]

While the doctrine first gained popularity during the Civil War, the sentimental preaching of it resurged after the Exclusion controversy, when the problems between Charles II and Parliament were increasing. The following passage sets this doctrine forth in the language of the time:

> We will still believe and maintain that our kings derive not their title from the people but from God; that to him only they are accountable; that it belongs not to subjects, either to create or censure, but to honour and obey their sovereign, who comes to be so by a fundamental

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[143]Ibid., pp. 141-142.

> hereditary right of succession, which no religion, no law, no faults or forfeiture can alter or diminish![144]

According to Figgis, although 'Passive Obedience' and 'Indefeasible Hereditary Right' were not new conceptions - 'as a force in English politics they owe their importance largely to the Civil War and the successful usurpation of Cromwell'[145]- the reinforcement of these conceptions had to do with the horror of the execution of Charles I, which evoked popular sentiment in favour of royal power.

In order to convince the audience that the monarchy is a divinely ordained institution and has absolute sanction to rule, Tate links Providence with the Monarch by using the line: 'Your [god's] image suffers when a monarch bleeds' (IV. v. 70). Lear himself also claims that the 'inspiring gods' will make 'Old Lear' become 'a king again' (V.

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[144] From an address of the University of Cambridge to King Charles II. in 1681, printed in the *History of Passive Obedience*, quoted by Figgis, p. 6.

[145] Figgis, p. 144.

vi. 102, 103). Lear in this sense alludes to Charles II, who 'would never have surrendered his divine right.' [146]

Lear's restoration demonstrates the indefeasible hereditary right of Kings, and it can be no coincidence that it was inserted into the play just when Whig demands for the legitimization of Monmouth were reaching an alarming pitch. In the play Edmund functions as a political allusion to Monmouth, Charles's illegitimate son, who was appointed for the succession by the Whigs during the Exclusion Crisis. The link between Edmund and Monmouth is indicated in the following lines:

> Thy mother being chaste
> Thou art assured thou art but Gloster's son.
> But mine, disdaining constancy, leaves me
> To hope that I am sprung from nobler blood,
> And possibly a King might be my sire.
>
> *History* V. v. 48-51

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[146]Kenneth O. Morgan, (ed.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 337.

Dobson argues that in these potentially controversial remarks, Tate has Edmund underline his kinship to the Duke of Monmouth.[147]

Concerning the relationship between Charles II and Monmouth, although 'the king doted on him, and indulged him at every turn,'[148] the only principle

> which Charles never abandoned was the principle to which he believed himself to owe his crown, that of hereditary succession. He stood by it now, and not only deprived Monmouth of his commission as general but ordered him to leave the kingdom.[149]

Tate makes a political point by emphasizing the evils of rebellion against rightful authority, and demonstrating that any conspiracy must be crushed. As Hume justly points outs, in Tate's *Lear* 'the succession question, with the suppression of rebellion by an illegitimate son, is

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[147] Dobson, p. 82.

[148] Clark, p. 96.

[149] Ibid., p. 97.

deftly (and safely) commented upon.'[150] The triumphant victory of the monarchy and Edmund's acceptance of his defeat - 'Legitimacy / At last has got it' (*History* V. v. 77-78) - confirm the monarch's right to govern and demonstrate the hereditary right of the monarchy.

Tate reiterates the same political message in the concluding lines through 'placing the event in a specifically political contest':[151] 'the drooping country now erects her head, / Peace spreads her balmy wings, and Plenty blooms' (V. vi. 154-155). Tate here reinforces the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings by emphasizing that the political stability and prosperity of the state become possible only when the monarch is restored to the throne.

In addition to confirming the hereditary right of the monarchy, Tate preaches 'loyalty' and 'obedience' in accordance with Filmer's patriarchal theory of the Divine Right of Kings. Filmer's

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[150] Hume, p. 350.

[151] Jean I. Marsden, *The Re-imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, & Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p. 29.

Patriarcha,[152] which was first published in 1681, unites the authority of father and legitimate king, arguing for the identification of the kingdom with the family, and of royal with paternal power. The metaphorical argument embodied in this theory is that the king is a father and his subjects are his children; the preservation of social order depends upon the children's obedience to the father and the subjects' obedience to the king. Moreover the metaphor of the king as the father of his people was frequently employed by writers who favoured the monarchy.[153] In summarizing the political value of Filmer's theory, Figgis says: 'The work won great and deserved popularity as the ablest justification of the extreme royalist doctrine.'[154]

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[152] Sir Robert Filmer died in 1653 and his manuscript of the *Patriarcha* was printed by the Tories in the 1680s, with a second edition in 1685. According to Ogg, 'It was considered by many as the classic English exposition of the theory of divine hereditary right.' David Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II* (Oxford, 1934), p. 613.

[153] Figgis, p. 149.

[154] Ibid., p. 149.

Tate deliberately blends filial devotion with obligation to the monarchy by connecting the concepts of father and king. He presents this father-king metaphor through the formal way in which Cordelia addresses Lear. In Shakespeare, Cordelia addresses Lear as 'father' (IV. vii. 17), or 'dear father' (IV. v. 24). She calls him 'My Lord' only once in the play, during the ceremonial episode culminating in the division of the kingdom. However, Tate's Cordelia consistently addresses Lear as 'king', 'royal lord', 'sir' or 'your Majesty' (I. i. 104; III. ii. 76; v. 16; IV. v.).

Obviously, although Tate blends father and king, his emphasis is centred on the latter, and Lear as a father is secondary.[155] Because it is the succession problem that most concerns him, the royal identity of the king - the 'divine right' of the Monarch - is the point that Tate underscores in his text. Tate is so preoccupied with his political motives for writing the play that he completely ignores the deep emotional attachment between father and daughter, which is

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[155] A parallel can also be drawn between Tate's Lear and Charles II concerning this point. Charles' paternity of Monmouth is in the end irrelevant, since the King has no intention of making him a legitimate heir.

powerfully represented by Shakespeare. In Tate's version, when Cordelia sets out on her journey in search of Lear, she says that the barren landscape is 'no shelter for the king', and that it is 'our charity to find him out' (III. ii. 104-105). Here, it seems as if she values Lear more as a king than as her own father, and the sense of a natural relationship involving intimate feeling is absent. Tate sacrifices this intimate bond between father and daughter for political motives.

In the dedication to *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth* (1681), Tate makes a political statement by asking: 'Where is the harm of letting the People see what Miseries Common wealths have been involv'd in, by a blind Compliance with their popular Misleaders.' He then continues to elaborate on the political message by stating: 'The Moral therefore of these Scenes [is] to Recommend Submission and Adherence to Establisht lawful Power, which in a word is LOYALTY.'[156] Here Tate makes it clear that loyal subjects should submit to this authority, 'revering the government of Charles II rather

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[156] Tate, 'The Preface to *The Ingratitude*', quoted by Spencer in *Nahum Tate*, p. 85.

than Parliament.'[157] Although, as it was explained earlier, Tate does not overtly spell out his political agenda in his Preface to *Lear*, his agenda is certainly revealed in his dedication to *The Ingratitude of a Common-Wealth.* Tate uses his version of *Lear* as an opportunity to preach passive obedience.

According to Figgis, 'the enthusiastic attachment to the notion of Passive Obedience was due to the Civil War and to the anarchy and tyranny that followed it.'[158] 'Passive Obedience' emphasizes that, whatever the circumstances, resistance to a king is a sin and ensures damnation. Even if a king (such as Lear) makes mistakes, passive obedience is still demanded of the people who have to endure suffering patiently without even a thought of uprising.[159] Thus in Tate's version, regardless of Lear's actions, all the good and admirable characters, such as Cordelia, Gloster, Kent, Edgar and Albany, still obey Lear and are willing to lay down their lives for him. Their

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[157] Marsden, p. 41.

[158] Figgis, p. 143.

[159] Ibid., p. 149.

devotion to the king strongly exemplifies the notion of 'Passive Obedience.'

In order to promote the Divine Right of Kings, Tate adjusted the image of Shakespeare's Lear according to what was politically acceptable at the time. After the Exclusion Crisis, fearing drama's potential effect on political stability, the censor was very stringent concerning the way in which a king might be represented on stage. As Marsden argues, apart from the issues of regicide and deposition, *Richard II* was banned because of the unflattering portrayal of the king:

> Not only was the portrayal of the successful deposition of a king a touchy subject in the troubled years of the early 1680s, but the censor feared it might suggest an uncomfortable parallel between Charles II and his unfortunate father as well as presenting an unflattering portrait of a king 'Dissolute, Unadvisable [and] devoted to Ease and Luxury.'[160]

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[160] Marsden, p. 45.

In line with this view Gary Taylor also states: 'Nahum Tate's adaptation of *King Richard the Second*, with its portrait of a "Dissolute, Unadvisable [King], devoted to Ease and Luxury," so obviously ran the risk of reminding audiences of their own Charles II that it was banned before it could be performed.'[161] Thus it is most likely that Tate had learned to be cautious from the previous failure of his adaptation of *Richard II* and not only intended to make Lear 'a better king' but also to provide a seemingly valid excuse for Lear's banishment of Cordelia.

In Tate's version, Lear's senility and his 'choler' are purposely emphasized in the conversation between Kent and Gloster[162] early in the play: 'Alas! 'tis the infirmity of his age. / Yet has his temper ever been unfixed, / Choleric and sudden' (*History* I. i. 53-55). According to James Black, by doing so, Tate encourages his audience to fit Lear 'into a stage category such as choleric king or deluded ruler.'[163]

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[161] Taylor, p. 24.

[162] Shakespeare's Gloucester is spelled 'Gloster' by Tate.

[163] Black, 'Introduction', p. xx.

However, Tate's motive goes deeper than this. By emphasizing Lear's 'choler' and the infirmity of his old age, Tate makes Lear's desire for retirement suggest that he regards his old age as incompatible with the rule of the state. In this way he avoids the implication that Lear is shirking responsibility and merely longing for personal freedom as Shakespeare's *Lear* does, and Lear's decision to leave the kingdom to 'younger years' (*History* I. i. 70) is justified. Most likely, Tate's main anxiety in setting this matter straight is that Lear's desire for retirement is likely to be seen as a parallel to Charles II, who, in his last years, 'enjoy [ed] a quiet life' and 'left a nation governed by and for those who believed in the divine right of Kings.'[164]

Concerning Lear's mistake in choosing the wrong heir at the beginning of the play, Christopher Spencer states: 'Apparently, officialdom did not see any objectionable political reference - even in 1681 - in the story of a king who arranges the succession stupidly,

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[164] Morgan, p.337.

and *King Lear* was undisturbed.'[165] Spencer obviously believes that Tate was lucky to avoid having his version of *Lear* suppressed, as the play 'points to the ramifications of a ruler's ill-advised arrangement of the succession.'[166]

While his comment is certainly valid in terms of pointing out the political sensitivity concerning the succession issue, Spencer fails to attribute any importance to Tate's insertion of the love story. However, by providing motivation for Cordelia to be indifferent to her father, the love story simultaneously excuses Lear for banishing Cordelia and for leaving his kingdom to Gonerill and Regan. Lear perceives Cordelia's cold response and her refusal of the arranged marriage to Burgundy as indicating her 'fondness for the rebel son of Gloster', who is 'False to his father' (I. i. 120, 121). What is more, the king's choleric temper and the infirmity of his age have already been introduced as motives by this point. Thus, to a large extent, Lear is absolved in advance from blame for his bad choice of heirs at the

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[165] C. Spencer, (ed.) 'Introduction' to *Five Adaptations of Shakespeare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 2.

beginning of the play. Most importantly, the rightful king's restoration to the throne (and the legitimate heirs' subsequent accession to the throne) at the end of the play rights the wrongly arranged succession at the beginning.

Political Motivation for Tate's Omission of the Fool

In his adaptation of *Lear*, Tate omits Shakespeare's Fool. In analysing this omission, James Black states: 'what he [Tate] saw as a requirement of uniform seriousness led to the excision.'[167] He argues that Tate's removal of the Fool demonstrates a neoclassicists' emphasis of the notion of decorum in that the genre of tragedy should not be mixed with comedy.[168] In fact, however, Restoration critics'

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[166] Ibid., p. 2.

[167] Black, 'Introduction', p. xix.

[168] However, as Muir rightly points out, if the reader believes that 'by his jests the Fool tries to take Lear's mind off his obsession with his daughters' ingratitude,' then 'Nothing could be further from the truth.' This is because the Fool 'provides not so much comic relief as a safety-valve for the emotions of the audience.' Kenneth Muir, 'Introduction' to Shakespeare's *King Lear* (London:

attitude towards comic relief in tragic plots is not stringent. On the contrary, in *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden actually approves of the 'way of mingling mirth with serious plot.'[169]

Moreover, in 1680 Dryden had written the tragicomic *The Spanish Friar* in the belief that audiences had 'grown weary of continued melancholy scenes.'[170] Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682) also had comic episodes. Even in his versions of *Richard II* and *Coriolanus*, Tate 'ineptly mingled comedy and tragedy.'[171] Thus James Black's view that Tate omitted the Fool to avoid mixing tragedy and comedy for the sake of decorum cannot be seen as well founded.

From a close study of the Fool's function, it becomes evident that Tate's omission of the Fool is mainly due to political considerations. In Shakespeare's *Lear*, the king and the Fool change places, and the

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Methuen & Co., 1963), pp. lxiii-lxiv. Tate seems not to have realized that Shakespeare's Fool is essentially a tragic rather than a comic figure.

[169] Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in *Literary Criticism*, p. 629.

[170] Black, 'Introduction', p. xix. fn. 13.

[171] Ibid., p. xix. fn. 13.

Fool is 'not altogether Fool' (*Lear* I. iv. 156); he is in fact 'the sage-fool who sees the truth.'[172] On the other hand, a mighty king, by a process of symbolic transformation, becomes a Fool's fool. As Muir observes: 'The Fool's character and function are both ambiguous, and all through the play Shakespeare is continually inverting the orthodox view of wisdom and foolishness.'[173]

In Renaissance drama, court fools were kept to serve precisely this function. During the tense political climate of the 1680s, the Fool's sarcastic way of criticising Lear would have been regarded as blasphemy and a sign of rebellion, and would not have been tolerated by the censors, critics and audiences. By deleting the Fool, a potential political danger was removed.

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[172]Enid Welsford, 'The Court-Fool in Elizabethan Drama' (1935), *King Lear: Critical Essays*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Garland Publishing, 1984), p. 103.

[173] Muir, 'Introduction' to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, p. lxiv.

The Fool is often sentimentalized,[174] and many critics, such as Welsford, Muir and Hunter suggest that most probably this is because too much is often made of a supposed relationship with Cordelia, based on the following lines of Shakespeare: 'Since my young Lady's going into France, Sir, the Fool hath much pined away' (*Lear* I. iv. 76-77). However, the Fool plays a much more significant role in the play. As Welsford states: 'The Fool is used both as a commentator whose words furnish important clues to the interpretation of a difficult play, and also as a prominent figure caught up into the drama, whose role and nature form a vital part of the central tragic theme.'[175]

In Shakespeare's *Lear*, 'folly and wisdom' is an important theme. The difference between wisdom and folly is the ability to be able to distinguish truth from falsehood. At the very beginning of the play, Lear's 'old and foolish' behaviour is revealed in his abdication and his

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[174] The sentimental assumption about the Fool's character is highlighted by Macready's restoration of the Fool in 1838. Basing on his decision of the Fool as 'the sort of fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced, half-idiot-looking boy', Macready gave the part to a woman. M. Mack, *King Lear in Our Time* (London: Methuen & Co., 1966), p. 19.

[175] Welsford, p. 103.

banishment of Cordelia and Kent. His fondness for being flattered exacerbates his inability to perceive the truth, and the Fool, who perceives what Lear does not, is the one who underscores Lear's folly. As Welsford rightly points out:

> Shakespeare makes the fullest possible use of the accepted convention that it is the Fool who speaks the truth, which he knows not by ratiocination but by inspired intuition. The mere appearance of the familiar figure in cap and bells would at once indicate to the audience where the 'punctum indifferens', the impartial critic, the mouthpiece of real sanity, was to be found.[176]

Nearly every one of the Fool's jests reminds Lear of his injustice and criticizes his foolishness. It is the Fool's jokes, riddles and scraps of rhyme, and his continual digs at Lear's consciousness, that help Lear to recognize his poor judgment by the end of act one: 'How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show! ... O Lear, Lear, Lear! / Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in, / And thy dear judgment out! (*Lear* I. iv. 276, 278-

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[176] Ibid., p. 116.

280). When the King himself can act as his own Fool after having lost everything, including his wits, the Fool disappears from the scene. Lear's ability to finally gain 'reason in madness', and his growing concept of his error, are essentially achieved through the Fool's participation and contribution.

At the beginning of his misfortunes the Fool mocks the king as 'Lear's shadow':

> *Lear.* Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
> Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?
> Either his notion weakens, his discernings
> Are lethargied – Ha! waking? 'tis not so.
> Who is it that can tell me who I am?
> *Fool.* Lear's shadow.
>
> *Lear* I. iv. 234-239

From very early in the play, there appears a paradoxical reversal between the king and the Fool:

> *Fool.* Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter Fool and a sweet one?
> *Lear.* No, lad; teach me.

Fool. That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,
Do thou for him stand:
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

Lear I. iv. 143-156

The continuous reversal between king and Fool may also be seen in their jesting about nothingness:

> Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a Fool, thou art nothing.
>
> *Lear* I. iv. 199-202

Moreover, Act One ends at the point which Lear becomes the fool of his Fool:

> *Fool.* If thou wert my Fool, Nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.
>
> *Lear.* How's that?
>
> *Fool.* Thou should'st not have been old till thou hadst been wise.
>
> *Lear* I. v. 42-46

Thus it is clear that through this process of reversal the wise fool shows his king to be a fool. As Welsford justly points out, 'Lear's tragedy is the investing of the King with motley: it is also the crowning and apotheosis of the Fool.'[177] It is the Fool in the play who defines Lear's initial mistake and determines his value as a king. The king, on the other hand, has made a fool of himself and is mocked for it by the Fool. It is this role reversal which prompts Tate's deletion of the Fool.

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[177] Ibid., p. 118.

During the period of political uncertainty in the Restoration, and especially after the Exclusion Crisis, people feared that the monarchical crisis of the 1640s and 1650s might be repeated. Thus the way in which a king was represented on stage was taken seriously. Plays were routinely interpreted politically and parallels drawn with contemporary politics. In order not to be considered subversive, the resolution of a play had to reinforce the established regime and confirm the Divine Right of Kings. Accordingly, the Fool's sarcastic criticism of Lear in Shakespeare's version had to be omitted as it suggested the incompetence of the King, thereby challenging monarchical rule. Censors and audiences alike would have feared that such a representation might foster political disorder and anarchy. By omitting the Fool, the mocking voice which underscores Lear's action is removed and a clear sense of hierarchical order, which is valued as paramount in the Restoration, is restored.

In Shakespeare's play, Lear's Fool is also presented as the witness to Lear's compassion and his recovered humanity. It is the Fool who kindles compassion and emotion in Lear. It is through the Fool that Lear begins to see humanity: 'Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in

my heart / That's sorry yet for thee' (*Lear* III. ii. 72-73). Although Tate ruthlessly deletes the Fool, he does not want to leave the opportunity of showing the goodness of the king. Thus he retains the lines which highlight Lear's compassion (*History* III. I. 41-46), and substitutes Kent as the object of Lear's pity. However incongruous this may seem, it maintains Tate's panegyric of the King and fits within Restoration political parameters.

Chapter Three

Tate's Addition of the Romantic Theme

In the previous chapters the significance of the happy ending was demonstrated. Because of the firm belief of the age that teaching morality should be the purpose of tragedy, by arranging the successful rescue, Tate ensures that Cordelia's virtue is rewarded. Thus the principle of poetic justice is met and the supposed didactic function of the play is fulfilled. It was also concluded that apart from rewarding virtue, the survival of Lear in happy ending contains a political message concerning the Divine Right of Kings. By asserting this doctrine, Tate attempts to affirm the monarchy's right to govern not only in the play, but also in reality. Thus there is no doubt that it was the happy ending which determined the popular success of Tate's version in its time, for it simultaneously fulfilled neoclassical aesthetic taste and political need.

Apart from the survival of Cordelia and Lear, the happy ending also includes the marriage of Edgar and Cordelia. Given that the love

plot is claimed to be the reason which makes the play conclude happily, serious attention needs to be given to it. Therefore this chapter aims to explore the significance of Tate's addition of the romantic theme.

According to Tate's preface to *The History*, his insertion of the love plot is purely aesthetic. However, a deeper exploration of the love story between Edgar and Cordelia shows that apart from satisfying changed aesthetic taste, Tate's addition of the love plot has social, ethical, and political significance as well.

Influence of Aesthetic Conventions

With the return of Charles II from France in 1660, heroic drama was introduced into England and became popular on the English stage. Heroic drama was the model of tragedy, and the main theme of heroic drama - love versus duty and the portrayal of idealistic love passions - characterized the dramatic mood in the early Restoration. Dryden's *The Indian Queen* (1664), *Aureng-Zebe* (1675) and his *Tyrannick Love* (1669) are all dramas of this kind. Restoration

playgoers, familiar with heroic drama, are said to have normally expected a love story in a tragedy when they went to theatre.[178] In order to satisfy the new taste of the audience, Tate invented a love story between Edgar and Cordelia, who 'never changed word with each other in the original',[179] when he rewrote *King Lear*.

Not only did audiences expect a love story incorporated in a tragedy, but a love theme had also been recommended by Dryden: 'For love-scenes', he says 'you will find few among [the ancient tragedies], whose gentleness would have tempered [the horror produced in ancient tragedies], which is the most frequent of all the passions and which, being the private concernment of every person, is soothed by viewing its own image in a public entertainment.'[180]

Shakespeare uses his poetic imagination to portray Cordelia, describing her 'smile and tears' (IV. iii. 19) as 'sunshine and rain at

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[178] Black, 'Introduction', p. xviii.

[179] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History*', p. 2.

[180] Dryden, 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesy' in *Literary Criticism*, ed. Gilbert, p. 617.

once' (IV. iii. 19) and 'her voice as ever soft, / Gentle and low' (V. iii. 272-273). He endows her with Juliet's beauty and Desdemona's gentleness, yet instead of making Cordelia shine as a lover, Shakespeare focuses on her character as Lear's truthful daughter. Shakespeare's main dramatic purpose is to portray Lear's spiritual pilgrimage to obtain self-knowledge - the process of his regaining humanity and wisdom through tremendous pain and suffering. Thus Shakespeare's *Lear* does not have a love story as a central theme.

It is not, however, true to say that there is no love plot at all in Shakespeare's *Lear*. In Shakespeare's version, the King of France's admiration for Cordelia's virtue is just as great as Edgar's love for her in Tate's adaptation. The King of France praises 'dowerless Cordelia' as 'most rich, being poor' (*Lear* I. i. 250) and 'takes up what was cast away' (*Lear* I. i. 253) at the moment of Lear's banishment of her. In Tate's version, the King of France is omitted. Since Edgar is made Cordelia's heroic lover and gets to announce that she is 'Richer in virtue than the stars in light' (*History* I. i. 206), the King of France becomes irrelevant and unnecessary.

Jonathan Bate suggests that the omission of the King of France

has contemporary political relevance.[181] Tate's prologue ends with a reference to the Popish Plot. In 1681, the year when Tate rewrote *Lear*, the Popish Plot was still a lively issue, and the first performance of Tate's version is 'contemporaneous with the trial in London of Oliver Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, on trumped-up charges of conspiring to land a French army.'[182] Thus Bate argues:

> Tate may have introduced a love affair between Cordelia and Edgar because the Restoration theatre demanded a romantic interest, but in doing so he was also altering the play's political complexion: it had been difficult enough for Shakespeare to place the cause of right in the hands of a French king invading England - in 1680-1 such a course would have been impossible. The exclusion of the

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[181] Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1838* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 61.

[182] Ibid., p. 61.

> King of France was as important for Tate as the romanticizing of Edgar.[183]

As with the adaptation of *Lear* in general, Tate does not overtly comment on his political intentions concerning the exclusion of the King of France. However, in view of the political tendency of Restoration drama in general, and considering the political sensitivity shown in all his adaptations (with the exception of *Richard II*), it is probable that Bate's statement contains an element of truth.

Tate himself seems to have considered the love plot between Edgar and Cordelia to be the most important of his alterations. He says:

> 'T was my good fortune to light on one expedient to rectify what was wanting in the regularity and probability of the tale, which was to run through the whole a love betwixt Edgar and Cordelia, that never changed word with each other in the original. This renders Cordelia's indifference and her father's passion in the first scene

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[183] Ibid., pp. 61-62.

> probable. It likewise gives countenance to Edgar's disguise, making that a generous design that was before a poor shift to save his life. The distress of the story is evidently heightened by it; and it particularly gave occasion of a new scene or two, of more success (perhaps) than merit. This method necessarily threw me on making the tale conclude in a success to the innocent distressed persons.[184] [sic]

In Tate's view, the love plot is designed firstly to improve the structure of the play, and eventually make the play achieve a unity of action. Secondly, it gives Cordelia a motive to respond coldly to Lear's love-test.

According to Aristotle, the unity of action is usually based on a single plot rather than two. Contrary to this view, Tate's adaptation keeps the main and sub plots of Shakespeare's original version. So apart from superficially tightening the structure of the play, the insertion of the love story by no means makes the play achieve unity

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[184] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History*', p. 2.

of action. Though Tate makes it clear that the necessity to provide Cordelia with a motive is the main reason for his addition of the love story, his purpose concerning Cordelia's motivation runs deeper than that. Since Cordelia's response to Lear in Shakespeare's version could be regarded as a gesture of justifying rebellion, Tate's giving Cordelia a motive is also done out of political sensitivity.

Is the Structure of the Play Tightened by the Love Story?

In analyzing Tate's preface, Christopher Spencer argues that by 'what was wanting in the Regularity... of the Tale', Tate surely means the lack of ties between the Lear and Gloucester plots, which he remedies by inserting the love affair.[185] Tate's dissatisfaction with the structure of Shakespeare's *Lear* reflects neoclassical aesthetic taste.

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[185] C. Spencer, 'A Word for Tate's *King Lear' Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900*, Volume 3, Number 2, Spring 1963. p. 243.

Tate says that he 'found the whole (play)' 'unstrung' and 'in disorder.'[186] In his view, the romance between Edgar and Cordelia has the function of unifying the play by 'run[ning] through the whole.'[187] The word 'whole' seems to be a key word, as it occurs twice in the preface. By using this word, and pointing out what he perceives to be the lack of unity in Shakespeare's *Lear*, Tate attempts to emphasize the importance of 'the whole' in a play.

The idea of the 'whole' is originally found in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle says: 'tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, ... a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end.'[188] This statement underlines the neoclassical origin of Tate's idea of 'the whole.' Aristotle also emphasizes that without the unity and sense of the whole the spectator will get lost.[189] Again Aristotle's view is in line with Tate's ambition to create a unified version of the

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[186] Tate, 'The preface to *The History*', p. 1.

[187] Ibid., p. 2.

[188] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, VI. 19-VII. p. 31

[189] Ibid., p. 31.

original *Lear*. Tate follows the critical principles of his age, trying to achieve one of the three unities - unity of plot. According to Aristotle, the plot of a play must imitate a single, complete action, 'the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed.'[190]

Tate considers the love plot to be the element which unifies the structure of his whole play. At the start of the play it gives an explanation for Cordelia's indifference to Lear's love test (under the banner of heroic love, a concept familiar to the Restoration audience, Cordelia's behaviour of lying to her father can be excused). In the middle of the play, it justifies Edgar's donning a disguise to save his own life and to protect Cordelia, and so enables the play to move on to the last rescue scene. It is argued by Tate in his preface that the love story encourages him to make 'the tale conclude in a success to the innocent distressed persons.'[191]

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[190] Ibid., p. 35.

[191] As James Black points out, however, a happy conclusion to a love plot is by no means obligatory, even in Tate's own plays: 'Each of his [Tate's] first two plays has a love plot, and

According to Aristotle, it is better if events in tragedy 'result from the inner structure of the piece.'[192] Edgar is a character from the sub-plot, and the King of France is a character outside the plot. In Shakespeare's play, 'Edgar is already the chief point of contact between the Lear and the Gloucester plot.'[193] In Tate's version, Cordelia's participation in both the main plot and the love plot strengthens the ties between the two plots. Thus, letting Edgar take over the role of being Cordelia's lover from the King of France apparently increases the contact between the main and the sub plots.

In order to illustrate that Edgar and Cordelia are in love, as well as to increase the contact between the characters from the two plots, Tate adds some relevant passages to the play. Before Lear's division of his kingdom, nine lines are added. Through this addition, the lovers are

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neither ends happily: the lovers in *The Loyal General* are as innocent and distressed as Edgar and Cordelia, yet they perish spectacularly. Why then the happy ending for the *History*?' - 'Introduction to *The History'*, p. xxvi.

[192] Aristotle, *The Poetics,* ed. Butcher, XIV. 1. p. 49.

introduced and Cordelia is given a chance to state the motive for her indifference (I. i. 56-64). The next added part comes after Cordelia's rejection of the marriage arranged for her by Lear. While Edgar is overwhelmed by his good luck that Cordelia is available again, she turns away from him in order to test his faithfulness (I. i. 188-234). The lines added to Act III, Scene ii show, firstly that Cordelia begs Gloster for aid in finding her father. Secondly, they reveal that Cordelia, with her maid Arante, disguises herself to search for Lear. At the same time, Edmund is tempted by Cordelia's virtue and draws up an evil plan to rape her (III. ii. 65-120). Following this, Tate adds lines in which Edgar (disguised as Poor Tom) rescues Cordelia from ruffians sent by Edmund; when Edgar unmasks himself, she confesses her love for him (III. iv. 1-115). In Act IV, just after Poor Tom and the blinded Gloucester have met, they encounter Kent and Cordelia (IV. ii. 65-110). In Act V, in added lines, Lear announces his happy retirement, and Cordelia and Edgar are elevated to the throne. Thus,

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[193] W. C. Carroll, ' "The Base Shall Top Th'Legitimate": The Bedlam Beggar and the Role of Edgar in *King Lear'* in *Shakespeare's Middle Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. David Young, 1993. p. 222.

the adaptation increases the meetings between the two families: to Edgar's encounter with Cordelia's father in Act III, Tate adds two passages that bring together Cordelia and Edgar's father, and five passages where Edgar and Cordelia meet. Edmund's lust for Cordelia early in Act III brings Cordelia and her lover together by providing Edgar with the opportunity to protect her. In this sense, the love story becomes 'almost as important as the main plot.'[194]

In his version, Tate retains the Lear and Gloucester plots as in Shakespeare, despite Aristotle's view that a 'well constructed plot should be single in its issue, rather than double as some maintain.'[195] Tate's *History* thus fails to satisfy the Aristotelian rule of unity of plot. According to Restoration aesthetics, however, Tate did tighten the main and sub plots with the love story between Edgar and Cordelia.

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[194] Spencer, 'A Word', p. 243.

[195] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, XIII. 4., p. 47.

Concerning the general tendency among Restoration dramatists to show a certain liberty in their handling of 'the rules', George C. Branam comments:

> the adapters of Shakespeare... seldom felt constrained to obey a 'rule' to the letter. They demonstrated a generalized awareness of critical principles rather than a well-memorized knowledge of a rule book.[196]

Tate's intention of creating 'unity of plot' through the romantic theme and his failure to do so may serve as an example of this trend although this is incidental to his purpose.

Romantic Love as a Motivation for Cordelia's Apparent Indifference towards Lear?

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[196] George C. Branam, *Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy*, University of California Publications, English Studies, No. 14 (Berkeley, 1956), p. 66.

We shall see from this part that from the aesthetic point of view, the love story invented by Tate provides a credible explanation for Cordelia's cold response to Lear's love test. Apart from that, using the love motive to interpret Cordelia's apparent indifference to Lear helps to prevent the play from suggesting a politically inappropriate message to its Restoration audience.

In Shakespeare's version, Cordelia's reticence does not have any explicit motive. Shakespeare's Cordelia responds to Lear's love-test in the way she does simply out of truthfulness. Her brief, yet candid answer, 'I Love your Majesty / According to my bond' (I. i. 92-93), and her further explanation that 'you have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I / Return those duties back as are right fit, / Obey you, love you, and most honour you' (I. i. 95-98) all confirm this point. What is more, Shakespeare also employs the dramatic aside to signal the dilemma Cordelia is about to face. The asides 'What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent' (I. i. 62-63) and 'I am sure my love's / More ponderous than my tongue' (I. i. 77-78), both reveal Cordelia's true feelings for her father and her unwillingness to express her love hypocritically.

Cordelia is also endowed with an enigmatic quality by Shakespeare, through her beauty, her words and her death, and it is this enigmatic quality which makes her a symbol of 'Truth itself.'[197] As Spencer argues, it would not be hard for the Renaissance audience to accept Cordelia's enigmatic quality, nor to find a reason for her behaviour, since what is highlighted is her symbolic value.[198] Marsden further states: 'Writers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries delighted in enigmas and conundrums; as such verbal games indicate, puzzling, mystifying, even tricking the reader was part of the pleasure.'[199] By contrast, this subtlety would have been lost on a Restoration audience who valued clarity and regarded ambiguity and enigmas as superstitions of the Elizabethan age.

So what appealed in the Renaissance was no longer valued in the following age. As discussed earlier, the development of science and philosophy, and the secularization of society, made Restoration

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[197] Spencer, 'A Word', p. 244.

[198] Ibid., p. 244.

[199] Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text*, p. 14.

audiences reject mystery and ambiguity in favour of lucidity and certainty.

Spencer makes this point when he comments on Cordelia's response to Lear's love test in Shakespeare's version: 'from the Augustan point of view her act must have seemed abnormal - a violation of probability - and in need of an explanation that would make it normal and probable.'[200] According to the neoclassicists, for a princess to tell her father she loves him in such an abrupt manner would have been a violation of decorum. When such decorum was violated, the character would appear unnatural. Since Cordelia's answer to Lear was not standard behaviour for a princess, it would not be understood by any 'reasonable audience.'[201]

In order to make Cordelia decorous, therefore, Tate has to give her a motive. In Tate's adaptation, before the love test, Cordelia reveals that she prefers 'her Edgar's Arms to Burgundy's' (*History* I. i. 64), and that she will 'with cold Speech tempt the Chol'rick King' (*History*

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[200] Spencer, 'A Word', p. 244.

I. i. 93). For Tate, honesty is not an adequate reason for Cordelia to respond to her father in the way she does. His invention of the love story provides Cordelia with the motive of her indifference to Lear, which is her desire to prevent her marriage to Burgundy and then be free to marry to Edgar.

So the violation of decorum is now acceptable because Cordelia's motive is love. In Restoration heroic drama, love and passion frequently served to excuse such betrayals of duty and friendship.[202] The following lines spoken by Cortez in *The Indian Emperor* may serve as an illustration:

> Honour begone, what art thou, but a breath?
> I'll live, proud of my infamy and shame,
> Graced with no triumph but a lover's name;
> Men can but say, love did his reason blind,

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[201] Rymer, 'Tragedy of the Last Age', in *Critical Works of Rymer*, p. 63.

[202] Dobree, p. 21.

And love's the noblest frailty of the mind.[203]

Thus love is shown to have priority, and all other virtues have to give way before it.

Concerning one of the consequences of Tate's providing Cordelia with a motive, Spencer argues that in Tate's version, 'Cordelia is not Truth itself, nor is she rigorously honest.'[204] It is true that Cordelia 'deliberately misleads her father'[205] (*History* I. i. 93). However, under the banner of heroic love, Cordelia is just as virtuous as she ever has been. In Tate's version, Cordelia is emphasized as the 'bright example' of 'truth and virtue' throughout the whole play, and she at last 'succeed[s]' because of these two qualities. Tate also invents the theme of 'piety' to further demonstrate this point, as will be shown later.

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[203] Dryden, *The Indian Emperor*, quoted by Dobree in *Restoration Tragedy*, p. 21.

[204] Spencer, 'A Word', p. 245.

[205] Ibid., p. 245.

Restoration audiences were accustomed to dilemmas produced by conflicts of love and duty. In Tate's *Lear*, Cordelia becomes a typical Restoration heroine who is caught up in a heroic dilemma: Should she marry Burgundy according to her father's will, or pursue her love for Edgar? In this way, Cordelia's behaviour towards her father becomes acceptable.

Tate's insistence on clarifying Cordelia's motivation and his inability to comprehend Shakespeare's character illustrate the changed aesthetic tastes of the Restoration. Cordelia's symbolic value and her enigmatic qualities were of no interest in the Restoration period. Under Tate's adaptation, the poetic richness and the unconventionality of Cordelia, which are represented so powerfully by Shakespeare, become diminished in order to transform her into a typical Restoration heroine.

But there is one more significant reason why Tate chose to transform Cordelia in this way: the historical context in which the play was written. On the surface, Tate's appropriation of Cordelia is without social or political implications. However, at the time when Tate rewrote *Lear*, the king had only recently survived the

Exclusion Crisis (1679-1681), so that any challenge to his authority was unacceptable. Tate must have been well aware that to present Cordelia on stage as challenging her kingly father, so soon after the Exclusion Crisis, could be seen as inciting rebellion. Moreover, being one of the Royalists, a supporter of Charles II, Tate felt a need to reinforce the authority of the monarch. Cordelia's enigmatic behaviour towards Lear in the original text was thus a problem for Tate. The only way of reducing the enormity of the princess's behaviour was to emphasize her love for Edgar. So apart from its entertainment value, the love motive serves an ideological purpose. It removes the seditious material from Shakespeare's version of *Lear*, and presents an affirmative social and political message, thus contributing to the maintenance of the social order.

We can see, then, that when Tate recast the character of Cordelia he deliberately sacrificed the artistic richness of Shakespeare in order to achieve two important aims: an acceptance from the stolid neoclassical audience and the appeasement of a royal dynasty.

Social and Political Motivations

In the Restoration, women actresses performed on the stage for the first time. The appearance of women actresses and the emergence of libertinism in this period were considered by moralists of this time to be the main causes of the decline in moral standards. These social changes are reflected in Tate's version mainly through his expansion of the female characters and his treatment of Edmund.

In order to accommodate the new phenomenon of women actresses, dramatists began to increase the number and scope of female parts. In response to this theatrical change, Tate not only makes Cordelia a heroine, but in Arante, Cordelia's confidante, introduces another female character to the play. In addition, he extends the parts of Goneril and Regan by adding new scenes in which they appear. Tate's expansion includes the addition of the scene at a grotto, where Regan and Gonerill[206] send love letters to Edmund stating their passion openly, lustfully and explicitly. Regan's and Gonerill's 'untimely

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[206] Shakespeare's Coneril is spelled 'Gonerill' by Tate.

strife' (V. v. 108) at the scene of Edmund's death, as well as at the banquet when they reveal that they have poisoned each other (V. v. 73-107), makes their jealousy more dramatic. These added scenes for female characters show Tate's adoption of new theatrical conventions.

The emergence of female players both elevated and degraded women at the same time. In Elizabethan and Jacobean times, it was not felt proper for women to perform in public. In comparison with the refusal to allow women on the stage in Shakespeare's theatre, the ability of women to join men on the stage represents an increased freedom available to women after the Restoration. The opportunity to act reflects an important gain in social freedom. On the other hand, however, 'the freedom women gained to play themselves on stage was to a large extent the freedom to play the whore under a different, more polite, guise. Acting was not a particularly remunerative profession, and the sexual availability of actresses was taken for granted.'[207] Actresses were convenient sexual objects for courtiers, and Charles II

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[207] Harold M. Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 152.

himself seems to have frequented the theatre 'as much for sexual as for aesthetic satisfaction.'[208] The *Memoirs of the Comte de Gramont* testify to the sexual indulgence of Charles's court, where 'the atmosphere ... was redolent of gaming, pleasure, and all the refinements of splendour and urbanity which could be suggested by the influence of a Monarch who was naturally tender and amorous. Its beauties were bent on charming; the gentleman had no other end but to please.'[209]

This libertinism was in keeping with the general sentiment of the time. The Restoration libertine denounced religion and worshipped nature, acting purely out of self-interest.[210] Though irreligion existed in ages prior to the Restoration (Shakespeare's Edmund is a typical Renaissance atheist who is as irreligious as a libertine of the Restoration), openly and publicly denouncing religion and defending

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[208] Ibid., p. 152.

[209] Ibid., p. 147.

[210] James Black, 'The Influence of Hobbes on Nahum Tate's *King Lear*' Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900, Volume 7, Summer 1967, Number 3, p. 383.

self-interest only became common after the Restoration libertine emerged.

Restoration moralists tended to blame Thomas Hobbes for this loss of moral values, and accused him of justifying the selfishness of human nature in *Leviathan.* In the Restoration, Hobbes' materialistic and deterministic ideas were widely read and 'misunderstood'.[211] In explaining the selfishness of human nature, Hobbes (Philautus) says:

> I do not at all question but that thou wilt fully believe that I have taught thee to be true; namely, that the world is wholly dispos'd of, and guided by self-interest. My main reason that self-interest is to be looked upon as the first Principle of Nature was, because I found that every man was desirous of what was good for him, and shun'd what was hurtful and evil: and this he did by a certain

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[211] Louis Teeter, 'The Dramatic Use of Hobbes's Political Ideas,' *E.L.H.*, III (1936), pp. 140-169; and Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1962), Chapter VII.

> impulsion of Nature, no less than that whereby a stone moves downward.[212]

This statement fed the belief of the true Hobbesist that there was no other motive but self-interest for undertaking any course of action. Some other passages of *Leviathan*, especially Hobbes' propositions concerning the 'state of nature' and 'liberty', were also well known:

> The Right of Nature ... is the liberty each man hath to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature, that is to say, of his own life, and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own judgment, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto. By Liberty, is understood... the absence of external impediments: which impediments, may oft take away part of a man's power to do what he would; but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according as his judgment, and reason shall dictate to him.

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[212] Black, 'The Influence', p. 382.

Leviathan, I. xiv.

James Black emphasizes that the philosopher's purpose was misunderstood. These parts were read out of context and mis-interpreted as 'announcing a programme for libertinism, irreligion and free-thinking - a code for the Restoration libertine.'[213]

One of the typical marks of the Restoration libertine is obsession with sensual pleasure. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, is a professed libertine, and his 'A Satire Against Mankind' reveals a libertine's inspiration. Rochester attacks human 'reason', which according to him, oppresses nature and delays happiness. Thus he promotes 'right reason' which is 'grounded in sense experience and avoids asceticism, serving rather as an instrument of pleasure or enjoyment by "renewing appetites"'.[214] According to him, true pleasure lies in satisfying the senses.

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[213] Ibid., p. 380.

[214] M. Price, ed. *The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 51.

Attitudes towards libertinism were ambivalent during the Restoration. At a time when Puritanism was out of fashion, people were attracted to sensuality and pleasure, and thus libertinism appealed to the Restoration age. Dryden was attracted to the Hobbesian libertine qualities of energy, vitality, and free-spiritedness. However, socially, Restoration libertinism was regarded as evil, causing corruption and posing a threat to social order. Fearing the further corruption of a society they saw as already corrupt, moralists of the time blamed Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* for encouraging libertinism. Charles Wolseley condemned Hobbes in 1672: 'It is but of late that men come to defend ill living and secure themselves against their own guilt, by an open defyance to all the great Maximes of Piety and Virtue... and most of the bad Principles of this Age are of no earlier a date than one very ill Book, are indeed but the spawn of the Leviathan.'[215] Even Rochester in his final repentance blamed Hobbes for his downfall. When he died in 1670 at the age of thirty-three, his dying confession was that 'that absurd and foolish

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[215] Black, 'The Influence', p. 380.

Philosophy, which the world so much admired, propagated by the late Mr. Hobbes, and others, had undone him.'[216]

Tate, too, felt the want of moral direction of his age. As he points out in the Prologue, 'Morals were always proper for the stage, / But are ev'n necessary in this age.'[217] By recasting Edmund as a typical Hobbesian libertine and exposing his 'impious' behaviour, Tate further illustrates the necessity of morals 'in this age.'

Tate's Edmund, a typical Restoration libertine

The Restoration stage was often an extension of the real-life political and philosophical milieu, and Hobbes' ideas were eventually given dramatic expression. Dryden's Zempoalla (*The Indian Queen*, 1663), and Maximin (*Tyrannical Love*, 1669) and Otway's Don John

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[216] Ibid., p. 380. Originally from: Robert Parsons, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Rt. Honorable John Earl of Rochester* (Oxford, 1680), p. 26.

[217] Tate, 'The Prologue to *The History*', lines 19-20.

(*Don Carlos*, 1675) are all characters who embrace the ideals of the Hobbesian libertine. They disregard morality and worship success, as does Tate's Edmund, who, in his love of pleasure, acts in total self-interest.

Though denial of religion and worship of nature are common features of Edmund in both Shakespeare and Tate, Tate took pains to make the Shakespearean 'natural man' more exactly Hobbesian. In Shakespeare's version, Edmund is portrayed as an atheist, but with subtlety and complexity. He regards 'Nature' as his 'goddess', he plots against his legitimate brother, and he betrays his father in order to get his land. His actions are justified to a certain extent, as he is presented as Gloucester's illegitimate son whose alienation from home is emphasized, and underpinned by Gloucester's casual and insulting way of revealing the secrecy of his illegitimate birth to Kent at the beginning of the play (*Lear* I. i. 9-25, 32). Shakespeare's treatment of the character thus leaves us uncertain about Edmund's evil nature. The following questions seem to be uttered from an angry, defensive viewpoint and highlight Edmund's bitterness about his birth and rejection by Gloucester.

> Why bastard? Wherefore base?
> When my dimensions are as well compact,
> My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
> As honest madam's issue?
>
> *Lear* I. ii. 6-9

Is Edmund inherently wicked because of his base birth, or is his behaviour a reflection of his anger and resentment against his loss of dignity? Shakespeare's text does not offer any conclusive answers to this question.

In contrast to Shakespeare's portrayal of Edmund, Tate depicts Edmund as entirely villainous. Before he dies, Edmund shows no sign of repentance under Edgar's avenging sword. On the contrary, he is proud of being a libertine and scorns justice. Tate removes the ambiguity which appears in Shakespeare's presentation of Edmund, partly because, in the Restoration, it was important to draw a clear distinction between good and evil characters. When characters are clearly identified as either good or bad, questions of motivation or of the fine line between good and evil vanish, and as a result, moral dilemmas disappear and the didactic purpose is fulfilled.

Thus Edmund is declared to be 'false to thy gods, thy father, and thy brother, / And what is more, thy friend' (*History* V. v. 31-32), and made to correspond to the popular conception of the Hobbesian libertine both in form and in spirit. First of all, Tate changes the structure of the original *Lear*, opening his play with Edmund's soliloquy: 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound' (I. i. 1-2). By these words, Restoration audiences would immediately recognize Edmund as a typical libertine. Edmund also identifies himself as a libertine and he is proud of being so: 'Awe thou thy dull legitimate slaves, but I / Was born a libertine, and so I keep me' (V. v. 19-20). Tate's Edmund, a 'natural man', clearly proclaims that for him the choice between good and evil depends upon self-interest: 'Be honesty my Int'rest and I can / Be honest too' (I. i. 297-298).

Like any other Restoration libertine, Tate's Edmund shows a love of luxury, which he shares with Gonerill and Regan. He enjoys the sensual pleasure of listening to music with Regan in a grotto at the beginning of Act IV. Apart from that, he is also obsessed with the pursuit of sexual pleasure. This quality of Edmund is highlighted in

the third act, when he is tempted by Cordelia's virtue and plans to seize her in 'some desert place' to rape her (*History* III. ii. 116).

In analyzing the libertine obsession with sexual pleasure, Weber states that 'the emergence of the libertine on the Restoration stage initiates the modern discourse on sexuality, for the rake represents the initial attempts of English culture to transfer control of sexuality from the divine to the secular world.'[218] Restoration attitudes towards sexuality are liberated in some ways. However, the Christian attitude towards sexuality presented in Renaissance drama is not abandoned. Edmund's lust and Gonerill's and Regan's adultery, which are cursed as vicious and demonic in Shakespeare's version, are retained in Tate's adaptation. Moreover, Tate provides Edgar with more explicit lines to announce that it is the adultery Gloster committed that cost him his eyes (*History* V. v. 41). In the Restoration, adultery was still regarded as sinful. The earlier view that obsession with sex derived from demonic possession and had the power to corrupt has not been changed. Sexuality enjoyed outside of marriage was regarded as an

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[218] Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero*, p. 10.

emblem of a fallen state, the sexual act itself as a manifestation of human weakness.

The Libertine's pursuit of sexual pleasure made him a primary target for moralists lamenting the corruptions of the age. The sexual energy of libertinism was regarded as an evil force which threatened the stability of the social order. Weber comments:

> after the Restoration, sex remains a dangerous and unpredictable passion, harboring a potential for destruction.... its power mistrusted, its source feared. To yield to the power of sexuality, to encourage its unlawful demands and pleasures, was to court a satanic power that threatened to overwhelm one's essential integrity.[219]

Sexuality was also regarded as a threat to political power. Renaissance England created itself around the image of a virgin queen Elizabeth whose 'undiminished and incorruptible sexuality

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[219] Ibid., p. 19.

bespoke the power of both the monarch and the nation.'[220] Charles II, on the other hand, is satirized for his sexual indulgence. The image of Charles II as the 'merry monarch', who indulged in sensual pleasure, caused the nation some political anxiety. Dryden wrote satires to ridicule Charles II's sexual life, and especially his affairs with actresses. There was a general fear that the King's indulgence would influence his decision making and weaken his political power. This anxiety is also reflected in Tate's version of *Lear*.

It is likely that Gloster is intended to allude to Charles II concerning the issue of adultery. Through the parallel to the contemporary situation, the political message Tate intends to convey is that in addition to the adultery costing of Gloster his eyes, it might result in the ruin of the state as well.

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[220] Harold M. Weber, 'Carolinean Sexuality and the Restoration Stage: Reconstructing the Royal Phallus in Sodom,' in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theatre*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (London: The University of Georgia Press, 1995) p. 84.

According to Hobbes' conception of politics, one of the most dominant human passions is the desire for power.[221] Hobbes calls it the urge of self-preservation, or natural right, and this instinct of self-preservation gives people the right to do all things necessary to that preservation, including the right to subdue or destroy others.[222] This hunger for power described by Hobbes is found in Tate's Edmund, who is a libertine not only in the sense that he recognizes no moral restraint in his relations with women, but also as a political villain. In Shakespeare's version, Edmund repents before he dies (*Lear* V. iii. 243-244), and reveals the whereabouts of Cordelia and Lear, intending them to be saved. However, in Tate's version, Edmund not only directly participates in Gonerill's conspiracy to murder Lear, but himself advises Albany to execute Lear. His intention is made political, that is, to establish power in the world of legitimate hierarchy.

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[221] Sugwon Kang, *The Philosophy of Locke and Hobbes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965), p.11.

[222] Ibid., p. 13.

Edmund's villainous qualities - his denial of religion, his filial ingratitude, his obsession with the pursuit of sexual pleasure and his ambition to overthrow legitimate authority - are all summarized by the concept of 'impiety'. Through 'impious' Edmund, Tate provides audiences with a glimpse of their morally corrupt society. Being a dramatist of his age, Tate felt responsible for teaching morality, and by inserting the love story, he offers 'pious' Cordelia and Edgar as moral examples for an immoral society.

Cordelia and Edgar as Examples of 'Piety'

> The love motive might have gained support from a misunderstanding of Racine, but it was a natural growth in a society which could find in its art, as opposed to life, nothing more admirable than heroic constancy and faultlessly noble sentiments.
>
> Bonamy Dobree, *Restoration Tragedy, 1660-1720* p.20

The love between Edgar and Cordelia is shown in a context of duty and responsibility that sets a moral example for a corrupt society. The two lovers are what Dryden calls 'examples of moral virtue writ in

verse.'[223] Tate's portrayal of the 'bright example[s]' of Cordelia and Edgar aims to 'teach the world perfection' (*History* III. iv. 104-105) as well as to 'convince the world' that 'truth and virtue shall at last succeed' (*History* V. vi. 158-160).

In Tate's version, despite Cordelia's claim that her love for Edgar is 'dearer than the richest pomp / Of purple monarchs' (III. iv. 98-99) and Edgar's declaration that his love for Cordelia is greater than his love for 'the empire' (V. vi. 157), the romance is not a total submission to passion. Rather it is an exercise in reason. It has little in common, for example, with the 'unlawful love' of Antony and Cleopatra, whose passion is not 'under reason's control.'[224] The love between Edgar and Cordelia is mainly morally impelled, and made compatible with reason and order. The pleasure of their love lies in their pursuit of virtue and piety rather than sensuality. In contrast to the Hobbesian libertine who acts out of self-interest, Tate holds up

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[223] Black, 'The Introduction', p. xxii.

[224] Dryden, 'The Preface to *All For Love*', ed. N. J. Andrew (London: A & C Black, 1976), p. 10.

Edgar and Cordelia for admiration as examples of disinterested service to others.

So Tate's inclusion of the theme of 'piety' aims at moral instruction. In Shakespeare's *Lear*, although values such as love, charity, filial gratitude, loyalty and forgiveness are vividly portrayed and highly regarded, the word 'pious' is conspicuously absent. In Tate's text, however, it is a key word. Through the concept of 'piety', Tate reinforces the didactic function of the love story. In order to understand this point, it is necessary to look at the connotation of 'pious' in Tate's version.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary states that between the years 1625 and 1734, the era in which Tate rewrote the play, the word 'pious' meant 'dutiful' - a person's religious duty to God and a child's filial duty to the parents. Dryden clarifies the meaning of the word 'pious' further in his 'Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy' (1679):

> when Virgil had once given the name of *pious* to Aeneas, he was bound to show him such, in all his words and actions, through the whole poem. Aeneas is especially

> '*pious*' because of his care of the Penates, and for having carried his father from the flames of Troy.[225]

Dryden's description also applies to the situation of Tate's Edgar and Cordelia, whose pious behaviour is highlighted by their belief in God's justice, their acts of delivering their fathers from adversity, and their love and obligation to each other.

Cordelia is a 'pious princess' (IV. ii. 91) and the 'true pious daughter' of Lear (V. vi. 32), whose 'piety' is 'Enough t'atone for both' her 'sisters crimes' (III. ii. 91-92), and whose virtue convinces Gloster that he will succeed (III. ii. 93-94) in his plan to restore Lear's kingdom. Edgar praises her as 'dearer than the richest pomp / of purple monarchs' (III. iv. 96-99) because of her 'amazing piety' (III. iv. 50). Likewise, as Cordelia's male counterpart, Edgar's devotion to Cordelia, his veneration of her virtue and piety, and the filial gratitude he shows to his father, are underpinned by Albany's announcement ('Look, sir, where pious Edgar comes / Leading his eyeless father' [V.

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[225] Black, 'Introduction', p. xxii.

iv. 111-112]) and Gloster's confirmation ('My pious son, more dear than my lost eyes' [V. vi. 124]).

Edgar's filial piety is not only shown through his affection for his own father, but also extends to the king. His assistance to Cordelia in searching for Lear, his prominent role in crushing Edmund's and Gonerill's conspiracy to murder the king and in the crucial last-minute rescue, all illustrate this point. Cordelia and Edgar are 'pious' also because of their faith that God will restore Lear. Cordelia believes that her 'prayers' for Lear's safety will be answered because the gods are 'never-erring' (IV. v. 67). Throughout the play, the characters who are presented as the examples of piety continuously demonstrate their religious strength and their strong Christian values. Cordelia's determination in searching for Lear shows her faith in the gods: 'Let's find him out, Arante, for thou see'st / We are in Heaven's protection' (III. iv. 56-57). Edgar believes that Lear's kingdom will be restored because 'The gods have weighed our sufferings; / W'are past the fire, and now must shine to ages' (V. vi. 40-41).

Apart from Cordelia and Edgar, Kent and Gloster also receive compliments about being 'pious' because of their loyalty to the

king. Kent not only believes the virtuous Cordelia is under the protection of the gods (I. i. 172), but also disguises himself to follow Lear after being banished, and suffers with the king. Thus he is pious. Gloster is catalogued as 'pious' ('The piety / That brought thee to this pass' [IV. ii. 85]), because he is willing to risk his life to restore his 'injured master' (III. ii. 94) Lear, and he is convinced that restoring the king is the purpose of the 'ever-gentle gods' (IV. iv. 179).

As explained in the first chapter, the death of Cordelia seems to question Divine Providence. This is a reflection of the increasing skepticism of the Renaissance era. It has also been concluded that Tate's affirmation that 'there are gods and virtue is their care' (V. vi. 96) is derived from his didacticism rather than reflecting current practices. In reality, the Restoration period was further secularized than the Renaissance because of the development of science and philosophy. Thus even if Cordelia and Edgar appear to be enthusiastically religious, 'pious' in Tate's context does not refers to religious devotion. The purpose of Tate's insertion of God's justice in his version is that he wishes to teach morality by preaching Christian values such as love, charity and loyalty for social and ethical ends. In

addition, Tate has a political motive in evoking religion. In making loyalty to the king a major component of the concept of 'piety', Tate attempts to enhance social and political stability; therefore in Tate's *Lear*, God is just and 'never-erring' (IV. v. 67). In this sense, Tate's reaffirmation of Christian values is aimed at supporting his own political agenda. By emphasizing his 'good' characters' respect for God, Tate affirms the theory of the Divine Right of Kings and thus justifies the monarchic rule.

In 'Rewritten Women: Shakespearean Heroines in the Restoration', Marsden comments that the virtue of Tate's Cordelia is passive. She states: 'Unlike her Shakespearean original, she [Cordelia] does not appear at the head of an army avenging her father's wrongs. Instead, Edgar leads the army while she is lamenting the fact that she was born as a woman, wishing 'I could shift my sex, and dye me deep / With women's weapons, piety and prayers' (*History* IV. v. 64-67).[226] Although Tate's version appears to be a panegyric to Cordelia's virtue, what is promoted is passive virtue. Marsden concludes that the

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[226] Marsden, *Re-Imagined Text*, p. 36.

'Restoration elevate[s] women into icons of virtue and victimise[s] them.'[227] Here Marsden focuses exclusively on the social purpose of Restoration dramatists' rewriting of Shakespearean heroines, instead of simultaneously exploring the political implications. It is evident that in Tate's version, rewarding Cordelia's virtue is as much political as it is social. Cordelia is rewarded for her loyalty to the patriarchal power structure rather than her virtue alone. Cordelia and Edgar are shining proofs of loyalty to the king-father Lear, as Cordelia declares: 'Bold in my virgin innocence, I'll fly / My royal father to relieve, or die.' (III. ii. 109-110). Therefore, it is her 'love of empire' which is valued and highly praised, because it emphasizes the importance of the monarch.

It becomes clear that the inclusion of the love story, which exhibits the values of heroic love, stemmed from political as well as ethical and social needs. 'It was ethical in so far that in ages of growing skepticism, and during this period if you were not a professed Hobbist you could at least fling a jeer at Muggleton, love attains inordinate

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[227] Ibid., p. 30.

importance.'[228] Socially, the same causes were at work as in the matter of heroic love; art provided what life denied. The average moral life of the courtiers was so corrupt that people felt the need to see the heroic ideal in art as comfort. Politically, at the time when the problems between Charles II and parliament were increasing, Tate's preaching the Divine Right of kings and his presentation of Cordelia's and Edgar's loyalty and devotion as conflating the image of king and father are designed to support Charles II.

By providing examples of pious characters, such as Edgar and Cordelia, and the salutary outcome of piety, the quality of virtue is promoted. Tate's happy ending is the natural outcome of his overriding concern with piety. In this sense, his statement that the happy ending is the result of the love story is incidentally justified. On the other hand, through his simultaneous presentation of Edmund's impiety and the destructive consequence of it, vice is discouraged. Therefore, through the themes of 'piety' and 'impiety', Tate fulfils the didactic function of tragedy. Tate's application of both

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[228] Dobree, p. 20.

piety and impiety to his contemporary political parameters and his presentation of the different outcomes of pious and impious actions provide the play with a political credibility suited to his time.

Chapter Four

Tate's Alteration of the Language of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Writers and critics of the Restoration considered Elizabethan language in general to be inferior to the language of their own age, and they believed that what was regarded as 'wit' in Shakespeare's time was no longer proper for their age. The adapters of Shakespeare's plays objected especially to his 'figurative expressions', regarding them as a sign of irrationality and a lack of artistic judgment.[229] Thus, in their adaptations, Restoration playwrights rarely used the original language of Shakespeare; instead, they replaced Elizabethan English with more 'refined' modern English which they considered more suitable for 'a self-professedly more sophisticated and literate age.'[230]

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[229] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 263.

[230] Marsden, *Re-Imagined Text*, p. 17.

In Tate's version of *Lear,* Shakespeare's language is considerably altered. His cutting of Shakespeare's text is substantial. Even with the additions, Tate's *Lear* is only about three-quarters the length of the original. He removes Shakespeare's figurative expressions, and omits 'ambiguous' words, especially those which could be perceived as having political connotations.

Although, on the most basic level, Tate's alteration of Shakespeare's language reflects the Restoration's changed aesthetic taste in diction, his reworking of Shakespeare's language is, to a large extent, politically motivated. Many critics have taken it for granted that Tate's rewriting of Shakespeare's language is based solely on changes in aesthetic conventions, but in fact it was the political situation of the Restoration era that played a significant part in defining what was suitable language.

The main linguistic reformers of the seventeenth century, such as Sprat and Hobbes, provided explicit links between language and politics. They believed that language could be used as an effective way to impose ideology. Words considered to have simplicity and clarity were assumed to be ideal diction and to contribute to political

stability. On the other hand, words considered to have ambiguity were rejected for their potential to convey subversive political messages.

In the previous chapter, it was concluded that apart from satisfying the Restoration audience's desire for a love interest in drama, the love plot removes what would have been regarded as ambiguity by the Restoration audience. Cordelia's indifference to Lear is now accompanied by a clear explanation of her behaviour: she has to oppose her father with 'cold speech' in order to avoid a loathsome marriage to Burgundy, a man she cannot love. In placing the conduct of Cordelia in the context of romantic love, Tate eliminates the risk that Cordelia's behaviour might be interpreted as a rebellious gesture in the Restoration's sensitive political climate.

Tate's political sensitivity is also apparent from the way in which he deals with Shakespeare's diction. He cuts any words or phrases which could suggest unfortunate associations with contemporary political figures or could be linked to the chaotic political situation of his time. Even when he keeps some of Shakespeare's key words, such as 'patience', Tate reconstructs the connotations of the words in order to underpin the happy ending. In addition, Tate makes use of a

specifically propagandist vocabulary, emphasizing words such as 'piety' and 'virtue' for the purpose of conveying the chief political message of the play. Thus Tate's reshaping of Shakespeare's diction is motivated not only by the changed aesthetic taste of his age but also by his political purpose.

The Restoration's Changed Aesthetic Taste in Dramatic Diction

In analyzing the stylistic preferences of the Restoration age, Marshall argues that the following passage from John Dennis's essay, 'Simplicity in Poetical Compositions' (1711), clearly explains the principles of dramatic diction recommended by Restoration critics. In his essay Dennis quotes, with approval, a passage from the French critic René Rapin:

> It ought to be natural, without any manner of Affectation, according to the Rules of Decorum and of good Sense. Phrases that appear too much studied, a style that is too florid, a Manner that is too nicely wrought, Things that are finely said, Terms that are too far fetch'd, and all

> Expressions that are windy and Swell Us, are insupportable to the true Poetry.[231]

Restoration critics preferred words of simplicity and clarity in dramatic poetry, language of a naturalness and ease fitting for the expression of natural passions; and they counselled the avoidance of excess and every quality which seemed artificial and studied. In his discussion of the importance of using natural language to raise natural passions, Dryden says: 'To describe these [passions] naturally, and to move them artfully, is one of the greatest commendations which can be given to a Poet.' He warns that 'A poet will be subject either to raise them [passions] where they ought not to be rais'd, or not to raise them by the just degrees of Nature, or to amplify them beyond the natural bounds.'[232]

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[231] John Dennis, 'Of Simplicity in Poetical Compositions' (1711), *Critical Works* II, p. 36, quoted by Geoffrey Marshall in *Restoration Serious Drama* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1938), p. 149.

[232] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 261.

Dryden also emphasizes that the language of poetry should be founded upon 'good Sence.'[233] A phrase endowed with 'good sense' is a phrase that has simplicity and clarity. Restoration ideas about 'good sense' are likely to be neoclassical; thus we may look to the *Poetics* of Aristotle for their origin. Aristotle states: 'when a word seems to involve some inconsistency of meaning, we should consider how many senses it may bear in the particular passage.'[234] Thus 'good sense' also implies what Dryden calls 'Sound reason'[235] - the intelligible, logical and probable consequences of things.

Restoration dramatists' objections to Shakespeare's language were based on this criterion. In the 'Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', Dryden says:

> many of his words, and more of his Phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand some are ungrammatical, others coarse, and his whole style is so

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[233] Ibid., p. 266.

[234] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, XXV. 15., p. 105.

[235] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 261

> pester'd with Figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.[236]

Dryden's view of Shakespeare's language merely echoed the general critical opinion of his age. He objected mainly to Shakespeare's 'figurative language', for it would create difficulties in comprehension. In an age that was accustomed to epistemological and thematic consistency, figurative language seemed mere bombast. In Dryden's view, the use of 'pompous words' was not beneficial,

> For Bombast is commonly the delight of that Audience, which loves Poetry, but understands it not: and as commonly has been the practice of those Writers, who not being able to infuse a natural passion into the mind, have made it their business to ply the ears, and to stun their Judges by the noise.[237]

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[236] Ibid., p. 250.

[237] Ibid, p. 265.

Thus bombast is 'a sound of words, instead of sense.'[238]

Restoration critics regarded the passion expressed in Shakespeare's *Lear* as bad, and considered his artistic expression to be lacking in discipline. In 'Some Aspects of the Style of *King Lear*', M. T. N. Winifred comments that Shakespeare's play 'might lead one to suppose that what happens in *King Lear* happens in some realm of the imagination beyond ear and eye.'[239] Romantic poets would regard the passion and profundity of Shakespeare's *Lear* as a foundation of the intellectual depth and sublimity of Shakespeare's language. According to the view of Dryden and his age, however, "tis an extravagant thought, instead of a sublime one; 'tis roaring madness instead of vehemence.'[240]

Tate removes what he regards as Shakespeare's 'figurative language' and 'pompous words.' What he overlooks, however, is that,

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[238] Ibid., p. 266.

[239] M. T. N. Winifred, 'Some Aspects of the Style of *King Lear*', *King Lear: Critical Essays,* ed. K. Muir (London: Garland Publishing, 1984), p. 189.

[240] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 265.

apart from simplicity, elevation and vividness are equally prized qualities in the diction of tragedy. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle states that tragic diction should be elevated, 'embellished with each kind of artistic ornament.'[241] Rapin also emphasizes the necessity of the greatness of diction, 'that it may maintain that great and majestick Air, with which Poetry is wont to adorn it self, and may express all the Force and the utmost Dignity of the great Things which it utters.'[242] This is because tragedy involves noble characters, and 'for kings and heroes an elevation of language is necessary.'[243] Not only does Tate ignore such necessary elevation, but by replacing 'figurative language' with familiar, substantive and literal diction which is close to daily expression, he diminishes the power and magnificence of Shakespeare's poetry, and moreover destroys the spontaneity which unites the language, thoughts and qualities of Shakespeare's

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[241] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. Butcher, VI. 2. p. 23.

[242] Rapin, *Critical Works II* (p. 37), quoted by Geoffrey Marshall in *Restoration Serious Drama*, p.237, fn. 1.

[243] *Boswell's London Journal*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (London: Heinemann, 1950), p. 83.

characters. Tate's cutting of Lear's speech at the ceremony of the division of the kingdom demonstrates this point.

Shakespeare's Lear delivers his speech in eighteen lines:

> *Lear.* Meantime, we shall express our darker purpose.
> Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
> In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
> To shake all cares and business from our age,
> Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
> Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,
> And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
> We have this hour a constant will to publish
> Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
> May be prevented now. The Princes, France and
> Burgundy,
> Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
> Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
> And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,
> (Since now we will divest us both of rule,
> Interest of territory, cares of state)
> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
> That we our largest bounty may extend

Where nature doth with merit challenge.

Lear I. i. 36-53

Tate cuts the speech to nine lines:

> Give me the map. Know, lords, we have divided
> In three our kingdom, having now resolved
> To disengage from our long toil of state,
> Conferring all upon your younger years.
> You, Burgundy, Cornwall, and Albany,
> Long in our court have made your amorous sojourn
> And now are to be answered. - Tell me, my daughters,
> Which of you loves us most, that we may place
> Our largest bounty with the largest merit.

History I. i. 67-75

In Tate's version, Shakespeare's first line is omitted, probably for the purpose of avoiding the complexity of the 'darker purpose' which later echoes throughout the play. The words 'while we / Unburdened crawl toward death' (40-41) are also avoided, most likely for their seeming lack of decorum. Lines 43-45 are cut perhaps for briefness. Then Tate

excludes lines 49-50, probably for their apparent repetition. After that, Tate reconstructs the last two lines - 'That we our largest bounty may extend / Where nature doth with merit challenge' - with the simpler diction of 'that we may place / Our largest bounty with the largest merit.' As well as omitting certain lines and rephrasing parts of the speech, Tate removes most of Shakespeare's vivid and characteristic expressions. For example, the line, 'To shake all care and business from our age' (*Lear* I. i. 37), which is so suggestive of Lear's desire to separate old age from responsibility, is replaced by the dull and tedious 'To disengage from our long toil of state.' The poetic phrase, 'younger strength,' is replaced by the more pragmatic expression 'younger years'. As Dryden points out elsewhere: 'It is very clear to all who understand poetry that serious plays ought not to imitate conversation too nearly. If nothing were to be raised above that level, the foundation of poetry would be destroyed.'[244] Through Tate's reduction of lines, simplification of phrases and removal of rhetorical expressions the atmosphere of high ceremony is lost in

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[244] Dryden, 'Of Heroic Plays' in *Critical Essays*, I. p. 157. quoted by Marshall in *Restoration Serious Drama*, p. 149.

Lear's announcement; and Lear's 'countenance', which Kent would 'fain call master' (*Lear* I. iv. 30), is missing.

In Shakespeare's version, Lear is represented as a medieval sovereign, and the division of the kingdom defines his role as a god-like king whose words have absolute authority and whose expressed thought is law. At the same time, Shakespeare uses the scene to reveal the 'darker purpose' of the play: Lear's violation of the duties of kingship, which is highlighted through his demands for love and affection and his banishment of Cordelia and Kent. In Shakespeare's *Lear*, the language spoken by Lear is appropriate to his status as king. Lear's proud and majestic qualities are all revealed through the richness of his speech and his richly evocative vocabulary. When Tate replaces Lear's majestic language with ordinary and uncharacteristic diction, however, the poetic intensity of the speech is diminished, and the significance of Lear's prestige and the power of his majesty are destroyed.

Restoration adapters were convinced that if Shakespeare's 'figurative language' was removed, his ideas and thoughts would still remain. Dryden states that 'If Shakespeare were stript of all the

Bombast in his passions, and dress'd in the most vulgar words, we should find the beauties of his thoughts remaining; if his embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting-pot.'[245] However, Tate's reshaping of Lear's first speech proves by its inadequacy that Shakespeare's thoughts and language are inseparable.

Tate also makes efforts to transform Shakespeare's poetry into descriptive language. When Tate's Cordelia, Edgar and Lear deliver their speeches, they seem to be describing emotions rather than experiencing them:

> *Edgar.* I heard myself proclaimed,
> And by the friendly hollow of a tree
> Escaped the hunt. No port is free, no place
> Where guards and most unusual vigilance
> Do not attend to take me. How easy now
> 'T were to defeat the malice of my trail,
> And leave my griefs on my sword's reeking point.
> But love detains me from death's peaceful cell,

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[245] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 266.

Still whispering me Cordelia's in distress.
Unkind as she is I cannot see her wretched,
But must be near to wait upon her fortune.
Who knows but the white minute yet may come
When Edgar may do service to Cordelia;
That charming hope still ties me to the oar
Of painful life, and makes me, too, submit
To th'humblest shifts to keep that life afoot.

History II. iv. 1-16

Here Edgar expresses his own frustration and his hope of assisting Cordelia. He has to disguise himself as poor Tom so that 'Edgar may do service to Cordelia.' Tate generalizes the dilemma of Edgar rather than portrays the character's deep emotions in the specific situation. Thus Edgar's speech is filled with pedestrian nouns and adjectives such as 'distress', 'wretched', 'griefs', 'painful', and the speech rings false because it lacks poetic power and the sound of genuine distress. The excessively descriptive rather than expressive nature of Tate's language diminishes the poetic intensity of the play and produces a tone of insincerity. It results in an artificiality that characterizes most Restoration tragedy.

Under the influence of neoclassical drama, Tate requires his characters to directly comment upon their feelings, actions and intentions as though these feelings, actions and intentions belonged to another individual. Cordelia's dialogue with Gloster (III. ii. 66-90), the conversation between Edgar and Cordelia at the reunion scene (III. iv. 60-115), and many other dialogues throughout Tate's version all demonstrate this point. Marshall comments that 'the self-conscious dialogue makes Restoration characters seem to stand apart from themselves in a kind of rhetorical schizophrenia.'[246]

It is evident that Tate takes pains both to replace Shakespeare's poetic language with description and to introduce self-conscious and artificial dialogues, in order to achieve the simple diction so highly valued by the Restoration age.

Although many Restoration writers reject Shakespeare's diction in the belief that 'the tongue in general is so much refin'd since Shakespeare's time',[247] they do occasionally express their admiration

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[246] Ibid., p. 166.

[247] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', pp. 249-250.

for certain aspects of his language. In his Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, Dryden speaks approvingly of the language of Shakespeare's Brutus and Cassius, stating that 'the expression of 'em [is] not viciously figurative.'[248] In line with Dryden, Tate praises the language spoken by Shakespeare's Edgar and Lear in their madness as being 'agreeable and proper.' He says:

> Lear's real and Edgar's pretended madness have so much of extravagant Nature (I know not how else to express it) as could never have started but from our Shakespeare's creating fancy. The images and language are so odd and surprising, and yet so agreeable and proper, that whilst we grant that none but Shakespeare could have formed such conceptions, yet we are satisfied that they were the only things in the world that ought to be said on those occasions.[249]

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[248] Ibid., p. 265.

[249] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History*', p. 1.

Spencer believes that the 'excisions [of Shakespeare' language] would probably have been even more substantial ... if Tate had not admired the language of Poor Tom.'[250]

Tate's admiration for the language of the mad speeches does seem genuine. However, when praising the mad speeches as being 'agreeable and proper', Tate also stresses that Shakespeare's language is so only 'on those occasions.' Clearly, 'those occasions' refer to the scenes dealing with Lear's and Edgar's madness. In this way, Tate makes it clear that such language is 'agreeable' only as a madman's vision and in the mouth of a madman.[251] In this case, Tate's admiration for Shakespeare is very much conditioned by the general critical view of the Restoration age, which is that Shakespeare's art is not bound by reason, but overshadowed by 'fancy' and irrationality.

While Tate commends the language of the mad speeches for being 'agreeable and proper', he simultaneously uses the terms 'extravagant

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[250] Spencer, *Nahum Tate*, p. 69.

[251] Black, 'The Influence', p. 378.

Nature' and 'Shakespeare's creating fancy'[252] to describe Shakespeare's poetic diction. Not surprisingly, these were the very features which critics of the Restoration regarded as weaknesses in Shakespeare's work.

James Black notes that 'Tate, in attributing to Shakespeare a fancy which is 'creating' and owes nothing to memory, is following Hobbes.'[253] In *Leviathan*, Hobbes defines fancy as the inventive faculty:

> He that hath [fancy] will be easily outfitted with similitudes that will please ... by the variety of their invention.... In a good Poem, whether it be Epique, or Dramatique; as also in Sonnets, Epigrams, and other Pieces, both Judgment and Fancy are required; but the Fancy must be more eminent; because they please for the Extravagancy.
>
> *Leviathan* I, viii

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[252] Tate, 'The Preface to *The History*', p. 1.

In line with this statement, James Black argues that Tate's view of 'extravagant Nature' and 'fancy' and their roles in poetic creation is derived from *Leviathan*. Although Tate's use of the terms 'extravagant Nature' and 'creating Fancy' might indicate a knowledge of Hobbes' discussion in *Leviathan*, this view obviously over-emphasizes the impact of Hobbes' aesthetic ideas on Tate and neglects the age's general criticism of these two terms.

Many Restoration critics believed that Shakespeare's 'Fancy' and 'extravagance' reflected an absence of reason and judgment in his art. In the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida* Dryden clearly associates 'an extravagant thought' with 'roaring madness.'[254] Unlike Hobbes' view, Dryden considers 'judgment' to be more important than 'Shakespeare's creating fancy', and urges that a poet ought to 'temper his fancy with his Judgment.' 'If this Fancy be not regulated', he says, 'tis a meer caprice, and utterly incapable to produce a reasonable and judicious

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[253] Black. 'The Influence', p. 378.

[254] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 265.

Poem.'[255] However, 'the fury of his [Shakespeare's] fancy often transported him, beyond the bounds of Judgment, either in coyning of new words and phrases, or racking words which were in use, into the violence of a Catachresis.'[256]

It is clear that instead of promoting 'creating fancy', Dryden emphasizes the importance of rationality and judgment for the poet; and, taken as a whole, Tate's evaluation of the mad speeches of Lear and Edgar is much more in line with this attitude than with Hobbes' view. Despite his momentary approval of 'extravagant Nature' and 'creative fancy' as 'agreeable and proper', Tate ultimately concludes that such an approach is appropriate only to the depiction of madness, thereby indicating that he supports Dryden rather than Hobbes.

In addition, Tate's conclusion that the language is appropriate only to madness also shows his political awareness. In his madness, Lear produces an extensive critique of the hypocrisies and injustices of society, as does Edgar in his feigned madness. In Orwell's words,

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[255] Ibid., p. 267.

[256] Ibid., p. 263.

Shakespeare's *Lear* 'contains a great deal of veiled social criticism... it is all uttered by the Fool, by Edgar when he is pretending to be mad, or by Lear during his bouts of madness.'[257] Tate suggests that since Lear's spontaneously subversive utterances are attributed to madness, they cannot be regarded as offensive or politically dangerous despite the political instability of the Restoration.

Marsden argues that 'Th[e] need to clarify Shakespeare's language bespeaks a profound distrust of language, a fear that unless carefully controlled, words both printed and spoken can undermine social and political order.'[258] Tate's assertion that Lear's and Edgar's mad speeches are appropriate only to madness, and his overall efforts to simplify and clarify Shakespeare's diction, concur with Marsden's view. Tate's adaptation of Shakespeare's language is not only derived from his aesthetic concerns, but also motivated by the belief that language has the power to cause ideological confusion and political

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[257] Orwell, quoted by Kenneth Muir, 'Madness in *King Kear*,' in *King Lear: Critical Essays* (London: Garland Publishing, 1984), p. 24.

[258] Marsden, *The Re-imagined Text*, p. 20.

disputes. In order to demonstrate this point, it is important to review the seventeenth century theory concerning language and ideology.

Tate's Political Motivations for Reshaping Shakespeare' Language

In explaining the preference for simplicity and directness of language in the Restoration age, Rothstein argues that, although the Restoration's stated aim of raising 'natural' passions did in part account for the trend towards 'natural' language, many aspects of Restoration style derived from 'the kind of simplification called for by the Royal Society.'[259] This opinion is shared by most modern critics of seventeenth century prose style, who tend to assume that the Royal Society's effort to refashion the English language is the consequence of the advent of science which 'turned prose style into a neutral medium for describing physical phenomena and conveying

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[259] Eric Rothstein, *Restoration Tragedy: Form and the Process of Change* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 161.

information accurately.'[260] Markley correctly points out the narrowness of this view. He argues that 'seventeenth-century discussions of style offer historical and political explanations for the phenomena that most modern critics attribute to narrowly aesthetic or epistemological changes.'[261] Though it is true that the development of 'new' science had a profound impact on literature, and that science and literature were inseparable at the time, the traditional view ignores the political and ideological contexts, the influence of which was enormous during the Restoration.

One of the major linguistic reformers of the seventeenth century, Thomas Sprat, pinpoints the cause for the radical changes of the English language in the legacy of 'our late Civil Wars ... a time, wherein all Languages use, if ever, to increase by extraordinary degrees; for in such busie and active times, there arise more new thoughts of men, which must be signifi'd, and varied by new

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[260] Robert Markley, *Two-Edg'd Weapons: Style and Ideology in the Comedies of Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 34.

[261] Ibid., p. 36.

expressions.'[262] In line with Sprat, many of his contemporaries believed that the Civil War 'was a contest for linguistic as well as political power, a struggle to determine which faction would define the languages of loyalty, morality, and virtue.'[263] After the Exclusion Crisis, with the increasing tension of the power struggle between Tory and Whig, the tendency to employ language for political utility reached its peak. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, fearing that another Civil War might break out, most dramatists pleaded for the nation's political stability by supporting the reign of Charles II. They rewrote Shakespeare's plays, infusing them with political arguments. As a royalist and firm supporter of Charles II, Tate not only depicts a triumphant political victory for the monarchy in his happy ending for *Lear*, but also develops a new propagandist vocabulary.

Tate frequently makes use of the word 'injured', a word which never occurs in Shakespeare's version. The adjective 'injured', which

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[262] Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, ed. Jackson I. Cope and Harold W. Jones (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 42.

qualifies the nouns 'monarch' and 'country' in Tate's version, echoes throughout the whole play ('Injured king' [IV. ii. 13], 'injured country' [IV. ii. 101], 'Thou injured majesty' [V. vi. 60] and 'royal injured head' [V. vi. 70]). In Act III, Scene ii, the word 'injured' occurs four times within the space of a few lines ('An injured father and an injured king' [III. ii. 69], 'This injured king' [III. ii. 77], 'My injured master' [III. ii. 99]). Tate's intention in repeating this word is to remind people of the painful recent past of the nation - the execution of Charles I - and emphasizes that the king was wronged. In the previous chapter, it was explained that the political situation after the Exclusion Crisis was very tense; people feared that the events of the 1640s and 1650s would be repeated and another Civil War would break out. The Popish Plot added to this political anxiety. Tate attempts to heighten his audience's consciousness of the recent history so as to avoid a recurrence of civil unrest.

Tate also adds the words 'virtue' and 'piety', which are conspicuously absent in Shakespeare's version. By repeatedly using

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[263] Markley, *Two-Edg'd Weapons*, p. 37.

'piety' and 'virtue', and by applying them to the situations in which Cordelia and Edgar demonstrate their loyalty and filial gratitude to the king-father (as shown in the previous chapter), Tate aims to promote loyalty and, moreover, to evoke the theory of the Divine Right of Kings. In doing so he hopes to convince his audience that undivided loyalty to the monarchy is the only way to maintain a stable nation.

By couching politics in terms of his new propagandist vocabulary, Tate attempts to impose ideology. He presents a politically-loaded programme: a restoration of order based on the unchallengeable Divine Right of Kings. The meanings he gives to the words 'piety' and 'virtue' underpin this programme. It is obvious that Tate's emphasis on expressions such as 'injured king', 'piety' and 'virtue' goes beyond mere poetic diction and derives from the political climate of the age. In Zwicker's phrase, such terms characterize the 'interlocking vocabularies' of religion, politics, and literature which 'transcend partisan political differences and help account for the stability.'[264]

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[264] Markley, *Two-Edg'd Weapons*, pp. 42-43.

In a passage from *Leviathan*, Hobbes also makes an explicit link between language and politics:

> The Light of humane minds is Perspicuous Words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity; *Reason* is the *pace*; Encrease of *Science*, the way and the Benefit of man-kind, the *end*. And on the contrary, Metaphor, and senseless and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them, is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention, and sedition, or contempt.[265]

Here Hobbes recommends rational language - words which are based on 'Reason' and 'Science.'

In Hobbes' system, reason delivers man out of the state of nature. For Hobbes, the role of reason is not to 'govern' or 'control' passions (as was alleged in traditional moral philosophy), but to 'serve and

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[265] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 116-117.

guide the passions.'[266] The proper language for poetry must likewise be characterized by mathematical plainness and precision. Hobbes believes that by using this kind of language, the betterment of 'mankind' in general can be sought and political chaos prevented. According to Hobbes, that the ideal language consists of 'Perspicuous words' which have been 'purged from ambiguity' that might otherwise lead to 'contention and sedition.'

When Aristotle discusses the proper kind of diction for poetry in his *Poetics*, he says: 'A diction that is made up strange (or rare) terms is a jargon',[267] because 'the strange word', he continues, 'will raise it above the commonplace and mean, while the use of proper words will make it perspicuous.'[268] If Aristotle's recommendation of perspicuity is based purely on a concern for stylistic clarity, Hobbes' insistence on the use of 'Perspicuous words' clearly goes beyond aesthetic consideration.

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[266] Kang, pp. 65-66.

[267] Aristotle, *The Poetics*, XXII. 2-3., p. 83.

[268] Ibid., p. 83.

Hobbes' theory that the use of ambiguous words might lead to political disputes is particularly relevant to the Restoration age. Tate's reshaping of Shakespeare's diction indicates that he is familiar with this theory. His efforts to purge Gloster's speech of those of Shakespeare's words and phrases which might lead to 'contention' and 'sedition' demonstrates this point.

In Tate's version, Gloster says:

> These late eclipses of the sun and moon
> Can bode no less: love cools, and friendship fails,
> In cities mutiny, in countries discord,
> The bond of nature cracked 'twixt son and father.
> Find out the villain, do it carefully
> And it shall lose thee nothing.
>
> *History* I. i. 286-291

In Shakespeare's version, the soliloquy is as follows:

> These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature finds itself

> scourged by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine come under the prediction: there's son against father; the King falls from bias of nature: there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves - find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully - and the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! His offence, honesty! 'Tis strange.'
>
> *Lear* I. ii. 107 - 123

Notably, Tate chooses to omit the words 'treason' and 'treachery' from his text. He undoubted realized that the retention of these words would have engendered political interpretation: when Charles I was beheaded in 1649, apart from being branded a 'Tyrant',

'Murderer' and 'Public Enemy', he was also accused of being a royal 'Traitor',[269] and was executed in the name of treason. In this context, the use of words such as 'treason' or 'treachery' would not only appear to justify the execution of Charles I but would also have the potential to cause a repetition of the royal bloodshed.

In Shakespeare, when Gloucester laments that 'the King falls from bias of nature' he refers to Lear's pride and arrogance, which later results in his drastic action of banishing Cordelia and Kent. The line is removed by Tate. He is afraid that it might be linked, in the minds of his audience, to Charles II, whose over-indulgence in sexual pleasure might well be construed as the King falling 'from bias of nature'.

Again out of political sensitivity, Tate removes Shakespeare's lines 'there's son against father' and 'there's father against child.' Most likely, he fears that Shakespeare's original lines will be interpreted as an explicit reference to the power struggle between Charles II and Monmouth, and will therefore fail to pass the censorship of the time.

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[269] Christopher Hibbert, *The Story of England* (London: Phaidon Press, 1992), p. 133.

Tate, however, by no means intends to avoid the delicate issue of Monmouth's rebellion against Charles II. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Tate's reinforcement of the Divine Right of Kings is to a large extent expressed in the crushing of Edmund's rebellion. Thus he replaces Shakespeare's original lines with the more subtle statement: 'The bond of nature cracked 'twixt son and father.' In this way, Tate still manages to use Edmund as a political allusion to Monmouth while at the same time ensuring that his play will reach the stage.

Spencer makes a point concerning the same issue, namely that in Edmund's opening soliloquy, Tate avoids Shakespeare's lines: 'I grow, I prosper; / Now, gods, stand up for bastards' (*Lear* I. ii. 21- 22). Spencer suggests that this is probably 'because the line might be taken to refer to Charles's illegitimate son the Duke of Monmouth, who was one of the chief Whig candidates for the succession. To begin a play with a villainous bastard was one thing: but to allow him to cry "Now, gods, stand up for bastards!" would seem most impolitic under the circumstances.'[270]

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[270] Spencer, *Nahum Tate*, p. 74.

Spencer's argument is supported by historical fact: in August 1682, Aphra Behn was sent to jail because her epilogue to the anonymous *Romulus and Hersilia* (or *The Sabine War*) suggested that death is too good a fate for one who rebels against a king and father.[271] Dryden's and Lee's *The Duke of Guise*, a Tory fable and an important political play of the time, was banned for similar reasons. The play gives an account of the Exclusion Crisis and ends with the King asserting his authority and having the insurgent Duke killed. The Duke's position parallels that of Monmouth. John Drummond says: 'in a letter ... Monmouth himself protested to his father about allowing the piece to be acted. A newsletter (29 July) reports that "A play by Mr. Dryden... wherein the Duke of Monmouth was vilified... coming to His Majesty's knowledge is forbid, for though His Majesty be displeased with the Duke yet he will not suffer others to abuse him."'[272] The fate of *The Duke of Guise*, and Aphra Behn's imprisonment, illustrate Spencer's point that the political struggle between Charles II and his illegitimate son Monmouth was a sensitive subject.

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[271] Hume, p. 362.

Tate not only removes language which has obviously dangerous connotations but also avoids words which have the potential to cause confusion or result in subversive interpretations. His exclusion of Shakespeare's key word 'nothing' is a good example. In Shakespeare, the concept of 'nothing' works as an essential theme; it echoes throughout the play, affecting both the main plot and the sub-plot, and is explored by most of the characters. In order to understand Tate's motives in omitting this word, it is necessary to examine the significance of the word 'nothing' in Shakespeare's version.

The word 'nothing' is used as a motif by Shakespeare, starting with Lear's division of his kingdom. When Cordelia is asked to respond to Lear's love-test at the ceremony, she is unwilling to express her love hypocritically and answers 'nothing' (I. i. 87). Cordelia explains that her 'nothing' means nothing more than the truth: 'I love your Majesty / According to my bond; no more nor less' (I. i. 92-93); 'You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I / Return those duties back as are right fit, / Obey you, love you, and most honour you' (I. i. 95-98). Lear's

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[272] Drummond, quoted by Hume, p. 362.

egotistic pride, however, is deeply frustrated by Cordelia's 'nothing' (I. i. 87), and he warns Cordelia that 'Nothing will come of nothing', a line that ironically predicts his own misfortune. For Lear the king, his abdication foretells that his kingly identity is lost and his privileges are gone. In this sense, Lear becomes 'nothing'. His 'train' is reduced from a hundred to fifty, five-and-twenty, ten, five and then to nothing ('What need one?' [*Lear* II. iv. 258]). At the moment when Lear's madness is evident, the Fool makes the point to Lear more obliquely:

> Thou hast pared thy wit o'both sides and left nothing i'the middle... Now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a fool; thou art nothing.
>
> *Lear* I. iv. 183-184, 188-90

In Shakespeare's sub-plot, the concept of 'nothing' is made more explicit. Edgar 'sinks through his own nothingness to take up another identity as poor Tom'[273] ('Edgar I nothing am' [*Lear* II. iii. 21]). In Tate's version, this announcement is replaced by 'Edgar I am no more'

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[273] 'Introduction' to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, ed. G. K. Hunter (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 26.

(*History* II. iv. 25). By avoiding the word 'nothing', Tate's line merely means 'I am no longer Edgar.'

In addition, Lear's statement that 'Nothing will come of nothing' is reiterated by Gloucester in Shakespeare's play. In the scene when Edmund carries out his plot to trick his 'credulous father' and his 'brother noble' (*Lear* I. ii. 175), the word 'nothing' dramatically appears in the sub-plot for the first time:

> *Gloucester.* What paper were you reading?
>
> *Edmund.* Nothing, My lord.
>
> *Gloucester.* ...The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself.... If it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.
>
> *Lear* I. ii. 31-35

Like Lear, Gloucester believes that 'nothing is always at the empty end of the scale.'[274] Again, in Tate's version, the word 'nothing' in Gloster's speech is completely removed:

> *Gloster.* Stay Edmund, turn, what paper were you reading?
>
> *Bastard.* A trifle, sir.
>
> *Gloster.* What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? Come, produce it sir.
>
> *History* I. I. 264-267

It is removed because 'nothing' has the same complicated connotation in Gloucester's case as in Lear's. When Gloucester has his eyes, he is mentally blind, without the ability to distinguish between good and bad. However, when he is blind and physically can see nothing, he regains what could be called his 'insight':

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[274] Ibid., p. 25.

I have no way and therefore want no eyes;
I stumbled when I saw....
O dear son Edgar...
Might I but live to see thee in my touch
I'd say I had eyes again.

IV. i. 18-19, 21, 23-4

Just as Lear finds 'reason in madness' (*Lear* IV. vi. 176), so Gloucester learns to 'see' in his blindness. This paradox of physical blindness and metaphorical insight - one of the significant themes of the play - is ironically embedded in Gloucester's conversation with Edmund quoted above. By dropping 'nothing' from Gloucester's speech, Tate attempts to avoid the complexity of the word's connotations.

As Hunter points out, 'Not until the end of [Shakespeare's] play, with its impassioned negatives, however, do we reach the end proposed for this pursuit of *nothing*.'[275] At the end of Shakespeare's *Lear*, the tragic death of Cordelia and the seeming deafness of Divine

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[275] Ibid., p. 26

justice finally strike the highest note of the concept 'nothing', which is highlighted by the fivefold 'never' in Lear's speech:

> Thou'lt come no more'
> Never, never, never, never, never.
>
> *Lear* V. iii. 307-308

Thus, Hunter summarizes 'The action of the play has reached the final *nothing*, not only of death, but of a world emptied of meaningful content.'[276]

The way in which Shakespeare uses words such as 'nothing' as a motif to convey his main tragic theme and messages not only reveals his dramatic skill, but also reflects the literary conventions of the Renaissance age. As Marsden points out, 'Renaissance literature abounds with puns and sometimes elaborate conceits, literary figures which by their very nature promote ambiguity by adding an additional layer of meaning.'[277] The word 'nothing' in Shakespeare's version

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[276] Ibid., p. 26.

[277] Marsden, *The Re-imagined Text*, p. 14.

certainly falls into this category. The layers of meaning Shakespeare suggests for the word, especially the nihilism 'nothing' evokes at the end of the play, makes it precisely the kind of word considered as dangerous by critics of the Restoration age.

As Marsden points out, 'On a large scale, the distrust of ambiguity of the words during the [Restoration] period can be tied both to an overwhelming concern with drama's effect on the audience, and to a fear of disorder outside literature, in the public mind as well as in the body politic.'[278] Tate's exclusion of the word 'nothing' indicates that he is not only aware of its profundity and significance, but that he also recognizes its potential danger for causing confusion in the social and political instability of his age. By identifying words and phrases with dangerously 'ambiguous' connotations in Shakespeare's version of *King Lear* and excluding them, Tate thus attempts to reduce possible political misconstructions and to minimize subversive inferences.

Tate's political sensitivity goes beyond merely removing some of the key words which have dangerous connotations associated with

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[278] Ibid., p. 14.

contemporary politics. Even when he keeps Shakespeare's words, he reconstructs their content in order to make them suit his political purpose. This point will be illustrated by looking at the difference in meaning of the word 'patience' as it is used in the two versions.

The lines spoken when Shakespeare's Lear and Edgar are praying for 'patience' have an exact verbal parallel in Tate's version. On the surface, the evidence seems to suggest that there is hardly any difference between the two uses of the word 'patience'. If the lines are studied in context, however, the word's connotations are quite different in the two versions. In Shakespeare's version, Lear (like Edgar) is a tragic hero who endures suffering by pleading for the capacity to endure:

> You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need! (II. iv. 273)
>
> I can be patient. (II. iv. 232)
>
> I will be the pattern of all patience. (III. ii. 36)
>
> Thou must be patient. (IV. vi. 180)

Men must endure (V. ii. 9)

The wonder is he hath endur'd so long. (V. iii. 316)

Thus the word 'patience' in Shakespeare's play conveys a strong sense of stoicism.[279] By praying for 'patience' from God, Edgar and Lear actually plead for strength to endure pain and suffering when life seems to offer no hope. In Tate's version, however, the two references to 'patience' and 'endure' ('Thou must be patient' [IV. iv. 154]; 'Men must endure' [V. iii. 29]) indicate hope and an unshakable faith in Divine Providence.

In the first chapter, it was shown that the awakening of the individual's self-consciousness in the Renaissance took its expression from the stoic philosophy of Senecan tragedy; and Lear in many ways resembles the Senecan tragic hero who endures suffering through stoic self-control. According to stoicism, 'patience' is necessary in the face of suffering. It is the virtue of those who have seen the nature of human existence, and who feel the necessity to pray for their own

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[279] 'Patience' was used to refer to Christian patience by many writers of Shakespeare's time, but in *Lear*, the tragic hero's praying for patience is more likely to be stoic patience.

strength and capacity to survive. Stoicism also advocates that the wise man should suppress anger and rage, and try to be master of all his feelings. The quality of endurance is simultaneously regarded as another important mark of stoicism: 'When you calculate how much you think you can endure, you place the limit of the wise man's patience just a little farther.'[280]

At the edge of madness, Lear prays to the gods, 'You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!' (II. iv. 266). But he receives no response. In the scene in which the mad Lear meets the blinded Gloucester, Lear concedes the fact 'that human life is inescapably tragic',[281] and becomes even more disillusioned:

> we came crying hither:
> Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air,
> We wawl and cry...
> When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools.

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[280] Eliot, p. 44.

[281] Muir, 'Madness in *King Lear*', p. 31.

Lear IV. vi. 182-185

When Lear says to Gloucester: 'Thou must be patient' (IV. vi. 179), he recommends patience as the appropriate response to the suffering and miseries of human life. In this sense, Lear's praying for 'patience' is in line with the stoic call for endurance.

Edgar's praying for 'patience' in *Lear* makes its connotations of 'endurance' more explicit. After Gloucester's attempted suicide, Edgar advises him: 'Bear free and patient thoughts' (*Lear* IV. vi. 80), where the word 'free' implies freedom from sorrow.[282] And he again prays for patience, on Gloucester's second attempt to commit suicide: 'What ! in ill thoughts again? / Men must endure' (*Lear* V. iii. 10-11). Thus the word 'patience' suggests that even if life seems to offer no hope, one should find the strength to cope and to endure.

Although Tate follows Shakespeare's lines and circumstances when he uses the word 'patience', he clearly means Christian patience. All the good characters in Tate's version uniformly demonstrate their 'patience'. None of them ever doubts the justice of the gods, however

terrible the circumstances. Though Cordelia becomes dowerless and titleless, Gloster loses his eyes, and Edgar becomes a beggar, they all believe that 'The gods have weighed our sufferings' (*History* V. vi. 40). Bearing this thought in mind, they pray for 'patience', in order to endure the misery for the time being, in the conviction that the gods' justice will eventually come. In the end, with the happy outcome, Edgar's view that 'Ripeness is all' is an attitude which neatly adapts to Tate's version.

The word 'patience' thus has different implications in the two versions. Shakespeare uses it to signify 'endurance', and it is clearly relevant to his tragic ending. By contrast, in Tate's version 'patience' implies hope, the hope that 'truth and virtue shall at last succeed' (*History* V. vi. 160), and this implication is supported by the happy ending.

Dryden was skeptical about the imitation of Shakespeare's language by Restoration dramatists: 'I fear... that we who ape his

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[282] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 173, fn. 80.

sounding words have nothing of his thought, but are all out-side.'[283] Dryden's statement is valid to a certain extent. Tate's self-claimed 'zeal for Shakespeare' never goes beyond merely repeating Shakespeare's words, and he ignores Shakespeare's thoughts and ideas. It is highly probable that the main reason why Tate uses Shakespeare's words but remains 'out-side' his thought is political caution.

We have seen that in Shakespeare's play the prayer for 'patience' is based on Lear's and Edgar's disillusionment with human society's hypocrisy and treachery, and their dismay at the ambiguous silence of Divine Justice. As Welsford points out, their pleas for 'patience' seems to imply that Edgar and Lear share 'an unflinching, clear-sighted recognition of the fact of pain, and the complete abandonment of any claim to justice or gratitude either from God or man.'[284] Tate's reconstruction of the connotations of 'patience' and his exclusion of the Shakespearean view demonstrate that his reworking of

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[283] Dryden, 'The Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*', p. 266.

[284] Welsford, p. 115.

Shakespeare's language is not only based on his aesthetic sensibility but also derived from his sensitivity to the political instability of his age.

Conclusion

It is evident that in embarking upon the project of adapting *King Lear* in 1681, Tate was responding to both the new aesthetic standards and the political situation of his time. Tate insists that his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Lear* is solely to 'polish the Jewels'. Yet the emphatic political message of the play reveals another intention. As his text shows, while making the play suit the aesthetic taste of his age, Tate fully explored the political potential of *Lear* and reworked it in accordance with contemporary politics.

Through the restoration of the king and excision of the Fool, who reduces the King himself to a fool, Tate corrected what the Restoration audience and critics would have regarded as wrong in principle. By demonstrating the lovers' devotion to the father-king, Tate constructed the theme of 'piety' along political lines. He also removed language which had the potential to seem politically ambiguous, often replacing it with the propagandistic vocabulary of the time. To a large extent, it is his emphatic political message that leads some recent critics to argue that Tate's adaptation of *Lear* is

driven solely by his political motivation, and to neglect the importance of neoclassical aesthetic taste.

However, since Tate's rewriting of the play not only met a political need but also increased his political credibility by showing his support of Charles II's reign, it must be asked why Tate was so unwilling to profess his political motives except in a passing reference to the Popish Plot as a 'churchmen plot'[285] in his prologue to the play.

The most likely explanation is that since the succession issue and the rebellion of Edmund in Tate's adaptation are obviously a parallel to Monmouth's political ambition during the Exclusion Crisis, if Tate made an explicit statement concerning that issue, the play would have faced the possibility of being banned by the censors. The previous chapter discussed how much sensitivity there was concerning the danger of an explicit stage portrayal of Monmouth's political ambition in the succession issue: a condemnation of Monmouth in the epilogue to *Romulus and Hersilia* caused the imprisonment of Aphra Behn;

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[285] Tate, 'The Prologue to *The History*,' line 24, p. 5.

and an explicit and unflattering parallel between Monmouth and the Duke of Guise caused the banning of Dryden's *The Duke of Guise*. Under these circumstances, Tate's extreme political caution and his unwillingness to admit his political motive are quite understandable.

Since Restoration playwrights and audiences habitually interpreted plays in terms of contemporary politics, Tate's political message could be delivered unmistakably despite his caution in revealing it. Moreover, Tate's restoration of the king presents a political argument in such a way that no Restoration audience could miss the relevance of the conclusion, or of the fable as a whole, to Charles II.

Thus it is not fair to assume that Tate's remaining silent about his political purpose while clearly explaining his aesthetic reasons for adapting Shakespeare was deliberately designed to mislead the audience. Moreover, Tate's arrangement of the love plot, his representation of libertinism, his modernization of the language and his insertion of the principle of poetic justice all demonstrate his efforts to up-date Shakespeare's *Lear* according to Restoration concepts of 'art', and show his desire to satisfy Restoration audiences' aesthetic taste. However, the prominent features of Restoration

culture and the neoclassical elements contained in Tate's adaptation have given some critics, such as Spencer, the incorrect impression that 'political considerations had a minimum of direct effect on Tate's *The History of King Lear*.'[286]

It was the coexistence of aesthetics and political enterprise that brought the play popularity on stage. The aesthetic changes were in accordance with neoclassical precepts of drama and suited the taste of Restoration audiences; and the revised play's appealing political message satisfied the audience's desire for political stability. Despite the changed political scene after the early eighteenth century, the aesthetic elements of the play, especially its depiction of poetic justice, continued to appeal to audiences until 1838.

The enduring stage popularity of Tate's *Lear* is impressive, but the play succeeded not because of its profundity, but because of its artistic and political astuteness. Once the culture and politics of the Restoration and the taste of the eighteenth century had become things of the past, the appeal of Tate's *Lear* was lost.

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[286] Spencer, *Nahum Tate*, p. 68.

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